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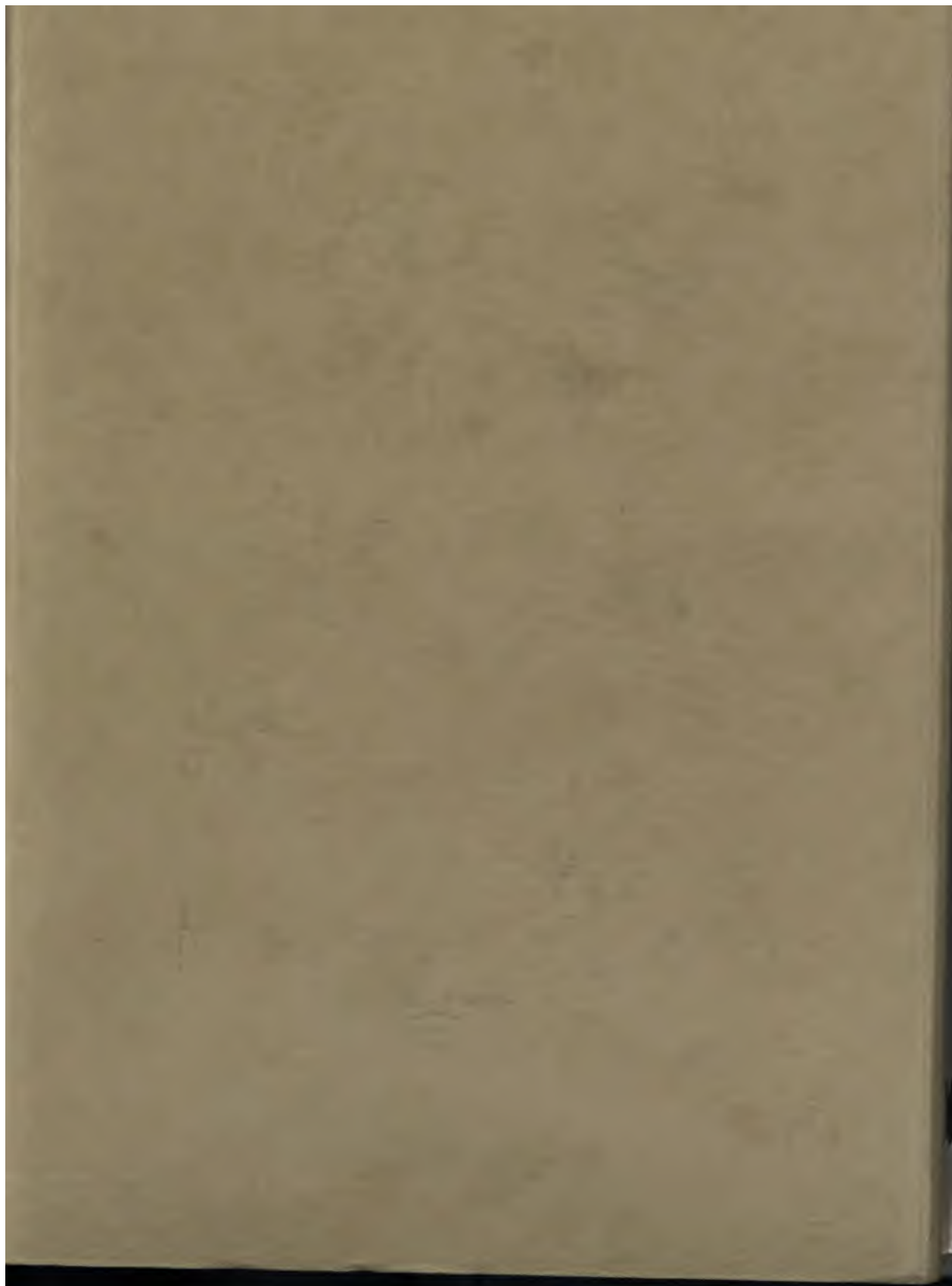
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# ESSAYS

OF A

## BIRMINGHAM MANUFACTURER.

BY

WILLIAM LUCAS SARGANT,

Author of "Social Innovators,"

"Apology for Sinking Funds,"

&c., &c.

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## Essay II.

### SCHOOL BOARDS AND THE IRRECONCILEABLES.

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#### I.

THE Education League was founded by a liberal politician, who sincerely believed in the paramount importance of extending and perfecting our school system: who imagined that the time was come, by one great effort, to blend and crown the numerous and half-abortive schemes of past years; and who was none the less disposed to undertake the task, because success would needs raise the doer to a respectable seat on the benches of the House.

A politician's efforts are limited in many ways, and especially by the tools at his command. His tools are men: these men too often make a tool of him. Mr. Dixon is a gentleman of moderate mind. He put himself into the hands of allies possessed of considerable ability and little discretion: of allies, friends to education but more friends to popular agitation: liberals in politics; bigots in religion.



Mr. Dixon, left to himself, would not have run into extravagances. But he got together and undertook to drive a team far too lively for his gentle guidance: he gave his cattle their heads, and they fairly ran away with him. He now appears as the nominal chief of a masterful and bitter faction.

---

The Education League has unintentionally done the state good service. During the preliminary agitation, meeting one of the leaders, I was taken to task as a political and religious liberal, for holding aloof from my friends. I alleged that though the promotion of education had long been my specialty, I declined to join in a movement which appeared extravagant in its objects. "You are doing a good work however: you are giving a powerful impulse; and *we* statesmen will supply the direction." I did not wait for a retort.

Happily, *the* statesmen in power did supply the direction. Mr. Gladstone's cabinet, and Mr. Forster in particular, earned the gratitude of the country by seizing the opportunity and turning it to account.

A shabby compromise! say the headstrong leaguers. A compromise, yes: a shabby one, no: nothing is easier than to prefix the epithet shabby when moderation is mentioned. To a bigot or fanatic, all moderation and compromise are shabby. Yet these are essential to sound legislation; they are the foundation of those measures which are the distinctive glories of a British Parliament.

But, say others, Mr. Forster's Bill was not even a compromise: it was altogether one-sided: it disre-

garded the programme of the League, and adopted the proposals of the Birmingham Union. It is true that this Education Act is just what the Union asked for, and is far indeed from the secular teaching and gratuitous instruction of the League. But the Union has no reason for supposing that its scheme had any influence on Mr. Forster's mind: the only triumph consists in finding that the Union nostrums have proved to coincide with the prescriptions of liberal and able statesmen.

But can we designate as a compromise, a measure which is substantially the Union scheme? We can: because the Union scheme itself was a compromise. That scheme was not the work of a faction, nor even of a party: it was not concocted by the clergy, sitting with closed doors; nor by Conservatives, disregarding the wishes of sincere Liberals: it was the work of clergy and laity, of Conservatives and Liberals: it was, if ever such a thing existed, a compromise.

Mr. Forster's Act then, coinciding with this scheme, was itself a compromise.

Cunning men, to gain what they want, ask a great deal more. Nay, if you are to get fairly treated by knaves, you must claim more than you are willing to take; since they never concede the first demand, however fair. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his own way, then he boasteth." The Union did not act thus: it propounded a scheme which it thought likely to satisfy all reasonable men. It had the satisfaction of finding its notions of fairness recognized by so able and conscientious a statesman as Mr. Forster.



## II.

I HAVE mentioned the extravagances of Mr. Dixon's self-willed allies. But this remark applies principally to the Staff; to the leaders at head-quarters. Among the ordinary members of the League, there were great varieties of opinion, and on the whole much moderation.

Even among those who attracted attention by their munificent subscriptions of £1,000 each, you would find several men entirely free from bigotry and sectarian bitterness: men moved by a pure desire of making education a reality; and who in this as in everyday life prove their excellence, not only in unstinted gifts of money, but also (a harder task for rich men) by a daily sacrifice of time, and by patient dealing with impostors as well as with the really destitute. These leaguers are quite out of harmony with the discordant Irreconcilables.

But many others were actuated by motives of a less honourable kind. Though favourable to education, they had not hitherto made sacrifices of much time or money in diffusing it. Therefore, when they were seen subscribing so large a sum as £1,000, men asked whence came such newborn zeal.

This was the answer malice gave. These enthusiasts, besides the stirrings of public spirit within them, feel the smart of a personal wrong. They are dissenters, with no small bitterness against the Church. Now many dissenters feel kindly towards the Church. These last however, are commonly men who associate for the most part with other dissenters; and

whose self-respect therefore is not wounded by the suspicion of a shadow of ecclesiastical predominance. But the Leaguers of whom I am speaking, belong to the richer and more educated classes; and having no ascetic restraints to deprive them of the pleasures of life, they associate with churchmen of the same grade. Now in spite of the steadily growing liberality of fifty years, there still remains even in the great towns, a faint sentiment of social pre-eminence on the part of the establishment: an irritating consciousness that it has the sovereign and the aristocracy among its members, and that the more stupid of country gentlemen look with contempt and aversion on a nonconformist, calling him a deist or an atheist, and harbouring such sentiments towards him as we harbour towards Joe Smith, Brigham Young, and the Mormon polygamists. There is the remembrance too, of a period almost within my own memory, when dissenters and radicals were confounded together as the *low party*.

It is quite natural then, that the richer nonconformists, coming into familiar contact with churchmen, should hate the Establishment. But it might seem easy to have such retaliation as to satisfy their craving for justice. Churchmen are imagined to feel a shadow of social superiority: nonconformists certainly claim a most substantial moral and intellectual superiority.

The Unitarians especially among themselves, indulge in much scornful merriment at the expense of churchmen's superstitions and intellectual weaknesses. The thirty-nine articles, with their wide dogmas; the Athanasian Creed, with its metaphysical puzzles and



its abrupt damnatory clauses ; are inexhaustible subjects for contempt. The partisans of verbal inspiration, idolaters of the Bible, are ranked with the old Jews who counted the words and accents of their sacred books, lest a particle should be lost. The cathedral service, imitated by some wealthy congregations, is called the Sunday Opera.

These gibes might seem enough to satisfy the appetite for requital. But unfortunately, though they gratify the speakers, they fail to pain the offenders against whom they are directed. The contest is too much like that between the United States and England : the Americans are sensibly wounded by our taunts ; we only smile when we are called "Effete Europeans." Lay Churchmen are generally indifferent to attacks. They do not profess to be bound by the thirty-nine articles : they lift their eyebrows when they hear the damnatory clauses ; they reply to the reproach of "English Opera," that to them sacred music is more elevating than an hour's cold moral discourse ; or than an ingenious attempt to wriggle out of the plain meaning of the New Testament, by a man still calling himself a Christian minister.

The Unitarian contempt then, fails in its purpose, and leaves the fancied social injury unavenged. The drops of bitterness daily and hourly falling, wear away the patience, and there springs up a rank crop of hatred towards the Church.

I have mentioned the Unitarians rather than others, because there is nothing in their creed or their moral convictions, to prevent them from meeting ordinary men and women at dinners, balls, or plays :

whereas Trinitarian dissenters, theoretically bent on another world and despising this, are imagined to regard the entertainments I have mentioned as heathen or devilish; and even in their intercourse about their daily affairs (to which they are in fact very attentive) to go about with eyes cast down, with bated breath and whispering humbleness.

I must not be supposed to mean that all Unitarians indulge in soreness and are constantly in the sulks. There are indeed those, men otherwise estimable, who are so far gone in morbidness as literally to declare themselves a *persecuted* race. Persecuted! admitted as they are to judicial offices in the law, and now to the highest places in Oxford and Cambridge. What a strange hallucination, or what a discreditable ignorance of the meaning of words! But by the side of these there are Unitarians of sense and breeding, who knowing themselves at least the equals of their ordinary companions, are quite at their ease among men of whatever creeds, and do not go about searching for imaginary insults. These look with regret and pity at their fellow-worshippers, who are fretted by the distorted notion that their associates of other religious bodies rather tolerate than welcome them.

Their newspaper the *Inquirer*, is moderate in its tone; and on this matter of popular education rebukes the extravagances of some of its readers. The Editor declares that the question ought to be looked at "in a comprehensive, and not in a sectarian spirit. It is one which we ought to discuss as citizens of a great country, and not as members of this or that Church."



If anyone still chooses to assert that many Unitarians are unpopular, I cannot resolve to dispute his opinion. Men who think themselves persecuted, cannot but so demean themselves as to be unpleasant companions. Here is the cause of their ill reception, and not their denial of the mysteries of the Christian faith. Others who go much further, find themselves welcome: men who go to no place of worship, avowed deists, have no doors shut against them, so long as they exhibit that sincere and reverential spirit, and practise those domestic virtues, which are now generally found among thoughtful unbelievers.

If Unitarians then, are rather avoided by Churchmen, it is from social and not from religious considerations. They are not in fact avoided, but heartily welcomed, so far as their behaviour is not disfigured by the morbid absurdities I have mentioned.

---

But I must go farther. I feel bound to declare my conviction that the followers of Priestley have laid the great towns under deep obligations. They have always had among them much practical philosophy, and an earnest love of education. By practical philosophy I mean the predominance of reason over passion: that moral tone which is found in *Sandford and Merton* and in Miss Edgworth's works: a moral tone far less common among Calvinistic bodies; where the high-pitched religious sentiments accord but ill with the practical business of life: where the men on Sundays join with unction in singing,

Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly,

and on Mondays go off to telegrams about the price of cotton, to time bargains on the stock exchange, to bitter disputes with their workmen, or to the management of ambiguous joint-stock companies. The hymn is natural and poetical when forced out of the bosom of a wounded virgin, but is nauseous when issuing from the mouth of a keen man of the world. If Unitarian doctrine does not satisfy the soul in its highest aspirations, it does not corrupt it by inconsistent or hypocritical professions.

That doctrine is good as far as it goes, and it has a manifest and wholesome influence on daily life. Many of its hearers are remarkable for their beneficence; and for that best kind of it which does not glare in subscription lists and vaunt itself in newspapers, but secretly, patiently, munificently, succours the broken down man, and solaces the widow and the orphan.

---

I am tempted to apply to the Unitarian the name, Modern Stoic. In beneficence he is certainly superior to his prototype; as living at a time when advancing civilization has abolished slavery, and has taught us that the poor man, of our own flesh and blood, is worthy of the same consideration as the prince or the philosopher.

In some respects however, the modern stoic resembles his ancient brother. Both believe in a divinity and in a future existence: both labour to cultivate the moral as well as the intellectual faculties: both contemptuously stand aloof from the superstitious multitude: both are regarded by the



world as members of a peculiar body, highly respectable but generally unsociable and repellent; most of them upright, severe, proud and disdainful: far superior in reality to the herd of Epicurus' stye, but inferior to the Epicurean in geniality and good fellowship. Entering into the battle of life, the modern like the ancient stoics seek by their philosophy to steel their courage and attemper their constancy.

The difference of circumstances causes different lessons to be insisted on. Seneca constantly reminds his correspondents that the great business of life is to learn how to die like a man. No doubt, to learn to die is necessary for all: but it was especially necessary at a time when no man was safe from violence for a single day; not Seneca the rich courtier, nor Epictetus the destitute slave. The modern stoic will rather teach men how to live; since the noble has no longer to fear the mortal displeasure of an emperor, nor the slave the cruel caprice of a master.

I do not mean to attribute to the Unitarians the absurd tenets of the earlier stoics; the profession of indifference to pain, to insult, to death. Nor do I mean to charge them with an ostentation of virtue: nor do I suggest that with Seneca, they recommend suicide.

Still less can I say that they imitate Epictetus, the poor lamed slave, who first learned by hard experience, like a Red Indian, to bear destitution and hardships and cruelty, and then proposed his practice as an example:—marry not; to marry will disturb your self-culture: weep not for the loss of

friends; grief will ruffle your hard-bought serenity. The modern stoics may claim a descent from Marcus Aurelius rather than from Seneca or Epictetus.

Still, the true Unitarians, unblemished by social intercourse with men of other denominations, want the gentleness and humility which would make them acceptable to all. We may say of them, as Cowper said of the Puritans, that they

Draw a rough picture of the Christian face,  
Without its smile, its sweetness, or its grace.

---

One happy result however, of their practical philosophy, is the comparative absence of parade and ostentation, among both the Unitarians themselves and those whom their example influences. If like others, as they get richer, they spend more, live in large houses, buy elegant furniture and drive handsome equipages, there is still a remarkable freedom from the pomp and show which new men often fall into. There is less too of the headlong haste to get rich, which once admitted fills a man's mind and shuts out better desires.

Priestley was by no means a mere closet philosopher: he was an aggressive politician. But he used his influence to promote intellectual pursuits. His "martyrdom" fixed in his disciples and their successors, a love of better things than money-getting and money-spending. He taught them to value good, sound, reasonable education, as distinguished from the drudgery of Latin verses and the *propria quæ maribus*. He made them for the most part intelligent, sensible, and reflective. On



the other hand, they have not often been remarkable for profound learning or exact science, cut off as they have been from academical advantages, until the London University and its affiliated colleges partly supplied their need.

Their cold and dry ethics, have never made much way among the working classes; who when they do go to a place of worship, like a more highly seasoned and stimulating style of preaching.

The true Unitarian discards all the poetry of Christianity, and all its highest teaching. He will not deny that there are things better than acts of justice, mercy, and reverence. He will acknowledge that the tone of mind, the habitual sentiments, of which justice, and mercy, and reverence are the spontaneous fruits, are superior to the fruits themselves. The tree which bears the crop, transcends the crop: the fountain transcends the water it gives.

Now the sceptic, and even the confirmed disbeliever, must impartially confess that the gospel histories have a strain of sentiment at once gentle and ennobling; such as softens the rugged and invigorates the feeble. The cold Stoic, whose heart is not ossified, but only deadened by neglect, would be astonished at the sentiments stirred within him, if he attended a Christmas service at a church, where without fanaticism but with reverent attention, the choir and congregation sing the carol:—

Cradled all lowly, behold the new-born child,  
A Saviour holy, in dwelling rude and wild!

Babe weak and wailing, in lowly village stall,  
Thy glory veiling, Thou cam'st to die for all!

The rigid man would confess that while he denied the doctrine, he found the sentiment irresistible. He would go home a wiser man; not accepting the narrative as true in itself, but regarding it as the poetical expression of beneficence and self-devotion in their sublimest form: convinced that the despised Jewish sect called Christian, had given to the world in the birth and passion of Jesus, a conception far more ennobling than even the pure and lowly morality of the gospels.

The Unitarians however, though wanting in the higher development of imagination and sentiment, have many excellent qualities in practice. They have no proselytising tendencies: you may trust your son among them without peril of perversion. They are not like Roman Catholics: they have no sacraments the partaking of which they believe to be necessary to salvation: nor do they as the Calvinists, insist on conscious conversion, repentance, faith, and a state of grace. They are highly reasonable people: too reasonable by half for unreasoning humanity. They condemn no man's opinions, so long as he holds them honestly. Their leading characteristic is not a denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, but an indifference to dogma.

Such a tolerant spirit, such excellent qualities, should render them popular. How is it that with the exception of a few of the best breeding, they are so little liked? I believe it is because they are a "peculiar people," severed from the world around them. Too numerous to be a clique, they almost rise to the dignity of a Clan, and like the members of a clan excite the jealousy of their neigh-



bours. They are to a great extent descendants of the old Presbyterians; and since the Stuart days, have intermarried so closely that you can scarcely offend one of the stragglers without having the whole swarm about your ears. They are as closely knit together as the Scotch, and have the same readiness to assist each other.

They retain too the traditions of times of persecution, and labour hard to believe that they are themselves victims: consequently they herd together and are cold to all outside them. Add to this an habitual consciousness of intellectual superiority (a consciousness well founded a generation ago). We cannot wonder that men and women generally rather shun their society.

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It must not be supposed that the League consists altogether, or even principally, of Unitarians, who are too few to carry on by themselves any popular movement. Trinitarian dissenters also are prominent in this strife.

There was a time, and not a remote one, when the Baptists and Independents could no more coalesce with Socinians, as they were then called, than with Jews or Mahometans. The denial of CHRIST's divinity, and the indifference to dogma, were then unpalatable to "orthodox dissenters," and were deemed little better than heathenism. Julian the Apostate and a Socinian teacher would have been about equally acceptable. In the last generation, Independents and Baptists, Robert Hall and John Angell James, might be seen on plat-

forms by the side of evangelical clergymen, but never, unless at the Bible Society, in the company of Unitarians, to whom they resolutely denied the name of Christian. They would have thought it a monstrous thing to join deists or heathens for the purpose of overthrowing a Christian church.

But among these Trinitarian dissenters, there has been a diffusion of the laxer opinions euphemistically known as "broad church"; of the opinions maintained by Stanley, Jowett, Baden Powell, Colenso, and Voysey. One congregationalist leader has gone so far in the ways of reason, as to deny the obligation upon Christians of keeping the Sunday as a Sabbath (Would that all might follow him, and let us have Sunday as a day of rest but not of Puritan austerity!).

Men who have so far departed from the rigour of their predecessors, are prepared to welcome Unitarians as men and brethren, and to cease taunting them with being deists and not Christians. They are now hand and glove with even the extreme opponents of the scriptural mysteries: with those who, while still calling themselves followers of CHRIST, make it their business to explain away the doctrines taught by St. Paul.

Unitarians and Independents and Baptists, now send their ministers to fight the good fight which is first to overthrow the Church, and secondly, to banish the Bible from all day schools.

## III.

SUCH were Mr. Dixon's allies. Himself a churchman, and by no means sharing the bitterness of dissenting hatred, he found that his restive team was quite beyond his gentle guidance.

At the election of the first Boards, in November 1870, the candidates were of two classes: those who were favourable to Bible teaching in schools, and those who were opposed to it. Even the League candidates declared themselves favourable to having the Bible read in the schools, but this was to be without a word of explanation: their opponents required that it should be not only read but also explained: explained, not by formularies, nor in the interest of a particular church, but in such a way as is already practised in the British Schools, supported principally by dissenters.

The League has since gone a step further, and has adopted the programme of absolutely secular Board Schools, in which the Bible is not even to be read.

Shortly after the election of the Boards, a vehement dispute took place as to the immediate application of the powers to compel children to go to school; and as to the consequent payment of the pence to denominational schools.

There was a third difference of opinion, but in a milder form, as to furnishing aid to Industrial Schools. These are all denominational. Ought they to be recognized and assisted?

---



But there was a preliminary and fundamental complaint on the part of the Irreconcileables. This had reference to the mode of electing the Boards.

The representation of minorities has long been demanded by the philosophical Radicals. This was attempted in the last Reform Bill; which in the case of boroughs sending three members to the House, gave to each of the constituency only two votes. But it might have been provided that each should have still had three votes, with permission to distribute them as he pleased. This cumulative arrangement was the one adopted by Mr. Forster. The great towns were to have Boards each of fifteen members: every constituent had fifteen votes, which he might give to fifteen candidates, or all to one candidate, or in any other proportions he pleased. Whimsical apportionments were made: many Protestants giving a vote to the only Roman Catholic candidate; others supporting partly the League, partly the Union, and thus showing that they wanted to get the best men elected, without reference to party politics.

Now the League candidates mostly belonged to the ultra-liberal party: to the staunch supporters of the representation of minorities. Mr. Forster's scheme of cumulative voting therefore, might have been expected to meet with their warm approbation. At head quarters however, the scheme was received with howls of disappointment.

Mr. Dixon's party in Birmingham showed itself singularly wanting in that moderation which characterizes political Great Britain, as compared with other countries; with France for instance, or the



United States. The party was determined to have, not a majority merely, nor even a decided majority, but the whole Board: no Union cat was to mew within the sacred precincts. Fifteen League candidates were started, and the votes were carefully distributed among them.

When the poll was declared, it proved that of their fifteen, only six were elected. The Union had started eight candidates, and all of them were elected. The fifteenth seat was filled by a Roman Catholic. The League was in a minority. Disinterested persons said that the result was the just punishment of its greed. But the League, like a fractious child, set about kicking the stone over which it had wilfully stumbled.

The failure was the natural result of intemperance. Had only nine or ten candidates been started on that side there might have been eight or nine elected; and this would have given the League a working majority. The other side showed more wisdom: it disclaimed politics: it had two liberals among its candidates, and the other six freely accepted the provisions that there should be a stringent conscience-clause, and that all formularies should be banished from the board-schools.

When the result was announced, when it was formally declared that the domineering, grasping majority, were ridiculously beaten, the League in its irritation laid its defeat at Mr. Forster's door. Fortunately, the London branch of the League appreciated the folly of the provincial head-quarters, and proclaimed its adhesion to the cumulative vote. In the next session of Parliament, Mr. Dixon found

an opportunity of moving the House of Commons to condemn that mode, but his own ultra-radical party spoke strongly against him, and the result of his effort was only to establish the practice more firmly.

---

Since that time the Boards have been the scenes of hot discussions. The Birmingham Board has particularly distinguished itself by its loquacity. The Six (the minority) have tried to multiply themselves by out-talking the Eight (the majority). All the Six may be called professed speakers: four of them being preachers, one an M.P., and the sixth an habitual leader of public meetings. Garrulity is their natural element; and they have shown how well they can disport themselves in it, by delivering orations of an hour or even two hours in length, disfigured too with unmeasured bitterness of expression, and blameable personalities.

One of their favourite topics has been the fictitious constitution of the Board. Addressing the Eight, they say:—you are a majority here, but only by a fluke: we represent the town: we defy you to carry your opinions into action. On our side, we concede that the Six might have had the majority: we only wonder that as they wilfully threw the chance away, they should be so fond of dwelling on their own folly.

But granting as I do, that the League might have had the majority on the Board, I must point out that it is doubtful whether they represent more than half the constituency. They might have had the

majority, because with their elaborate organization for political purposes, they could marshal their forces to the best advantage, and so apportion the votes that few should be wasted.

For the 15 seats there were 28 candidates.

These may fairly be divided into the Denominational and the Secular: the denominational being those who wished to continue the present schools attached to churches and chapels, and to supplement them with board-schools; the secular being those who wished to abolish the present schools, and to establish national schools in which no religion should be taught.

The denominational candidates consisted of,

first, the eight churchmen . . . .	8
secondly, a Roman Catholic . . . .	1
thirdly, two independent candidates . .	2
	<hr/>
	11
	<hr/>

On the secular side, there were, Leaguers 15

Independent candidates . . . .	2
	<hr/>
	17
	<hr/>

Now the denominationalists polled 205,000 votes,  
and the secularists . . . . 230,000 „

The secularists therefore, had the majority of votes, in the proportion of 8 to 7.

But an important qualification must be made. It is admitted that the constituents were not governed by political considerations alone, but that personal feeling went for much. A man of weight got his neighbours' suffrages, because he was respected; a large manufacturer, through the influence of his

people; a minister of religion by his preaching and his good works in his parish. These personal votes did most for the secular side, because there were 17 candidates against the 11 denominational: that is, there were 6 additional centres of personal influence. If the denominational party had started 6 more men, they might have polled as many votes on the whole, as the other party.

You will say that these personal votes given to the additional denominationalists, would have been taken partly from other members of the same side. That is true. But some also would have been taken from the other side, and would thus have weakened the secularists. The denominational party was wise in starting only 8 candidates: for, carrying these, it got a majority of the Board. But if its object had been to get a majority of votes for its party, it should have started far more men.

I say then, that though the secularists got one-seventh more votes than their opponents, this does not prove that they had a majority among the constituency: far less does it prove that they had that overwhelming majority which they claim.

---

But here the Six come in with a triumphant air. "We remind you that the question is not one of votes but of voters. Canon O'Sullivan, you say, was at the head of the poll with 35,000 votes: on scrutiny we find that his voters were little over 3,000. On the other hand, Mr. Dixon, who was only eighth on the poll, and who received only half as many votes as Canon O'Sullivan, had four times



as many men voting for him. The Canon had a great number of plumpers; Mr. Dixon had scarcely any: we assert that Mr. Dixon's 14,435 men, ought to outweigh the Canon's 3,171 men."

I will illustrate this distinction. Before the election, 15 Leaguers happen to be together. They are all pledged to distribute their votes among the League candidates; a vote to each. Among the party however, is one who would like better to give all his votes to his minister. When he mentions this, a second and a third say that they too have each a favourite for whom they would willingly plump. After a discussion it is agreed that all shall plump: one giving all his 15 votes for Mr. Dawson, another his for Mr. Dixon, the fifteenth man his for Mr. Chamberlain.

This agreement makes no change in the prospects of the party. Under the original arrangement, Mr. Dawson would have had 15 votes; one from A, one from B, and so on up to O. Under the new arrangement, Mr. Dawson gets 15 votes, but all from A, his disciple. Mr. Dixon and Mr. Chamberlain and all the 15 League Candidates still get 15 votes each, but each of them by a plumper and not by 15 split votes. In fact, here are 225 votes, given by 15 persons to 15 candidates: under either arrangement each of the League Candidates gets 15.

But according to the theory of the Six, the new arrangement is very damaging. For under the first arrangement, Mr. Dixon would have had not only 15 votes but also 15 voters: he now has 15 votes indeed, but only one voter. The same is true of

all the 15 League Candidates. The voter A would have counted 15 times; he now counts only once: the voters B to O would have counted 15 times each: thus 15 voters would have counted 225 times; and there is an apparent loss to the League of 210 voters. In League logic, the fifteenth part of a man is as great as the whole.

Under the first arrangement, the 15 voters gave, each of them,  $\frac{1}{15}$ th of his influence to each of 15 candidates: under the second arrangement each of them gave all his influence to one candidate. We are asked to believe (restraining our laughter) that this fifteenth part of a man's influence would have been equal to the whole.

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But why this new-fangled scheme, they say? The objection is whimsical, coming from the party of progress. Have not most of the great measures of the past fifty years been new-fangled?

Is the scheme a good one? That is the question. I reply that it does what it proposes: it gives representation to minorities: it gives a member of the Board to the Roman Catholics, who by their numbers are entitled to one: it will hereafter give to the Church that larger share of the Board which is due to its educational zeal and to its large following.

But suppose that this cumulative voting had not been provided by the Act. Surely it cannot be supposed that the Board would have been elected in a lump by the whole town. All parties in the House would have recoiled from giving the great

towns bound into the hands of the League, without any opposition to restrain them: this would have been like a House of Commons consisting of all Liberals, without any Conservative opposition. We know what tyrannical administration that means. Some mode of representing both sides, would certainly have been found.

Possibly, Mr. Cobden's proposal might have been adopted in a modified form. This proposal was that a borough should be split into as many parts as there were members to be elected; so that a great town sending three members should be made into three boroughs each sending one. The obvious difficulty is the securing a fair partition, and so fair a one as to satisfy everyone; a partition too, to be changed after each census. But for School Board Elections, the present division into wards would suffice. The Birmingham Town Council has 16 new members elected annually: It might also have 16 Board members elected by the same constituencies every third year.

I should be sorry to see an election by wards, substituted for cumulative voting. I cannot say what the result would be. But I can say that it would not give the Leaguers all the seats.

#### IV.

I HAVE said that the eight, constituting the majority of the Board, agree in requiring the Bible to be taught in the schools: to be taught, but not so as to inculcate the dogmas of any Church;



just as has long been done in the British schools, supported by Quakers and other nonconformists.

"An open Bible," has long been the motto of Protestants, as against Roman Catholics. But it is in vain that you open the book unless you get it read and thought about. Our forefathers, who had a mortal struggle with the church of Rome, would have looked upon the banishment from schools of Bible teaching, as they would have looked upon taking bread out of children's mouths. The Roman Catholics have of late years had so little success in making English converts, except among Oxford divines, and dilettanti of Mayfair, that we forget the peril to which we should expose ourselves, if we followed the insidious counsels of the Irreconcileables; who in their hatred of the Church of England, would throw us into the arms of the Church of Rome.

Let us recollect that the infallible Church never changes: that its doctrines are the same as in the days of Luther.

I should be sorry to be classed with those ignorant persons who forget, or never knew, the services the Papacy rendered to Europe, when it stood between the barons and their vassals, and laboured to emancipate the oppressed serfs. Nor can I join in the cry against the Jesuits, as men addicted to guile, perjury, and casuistical advice to their penitents: for I cannot forget that Voltaire, in his *Siècle de Louis XIV*, declares that though it suited Pascal's purpose to decry the order of Jesuits as the enemies of the Jansenists, that order was really no worse than others as to sophistry and casuistry: and I remember also the opinion of a competent



judge, that the Jesuits are now especially hated, only because they are especially eager in the performance of what they regard as their duty.

Where however, a body of men have a mistaken sense of duty, their earnestness may be as injurious to society as deliberate wickedness. In England the Roman Catholic party is unheard of: in Ireland it sides with the Liberals, as the best mode of aiding the true Church. But "there is not and cannot be liberal Catholicism. The liberal Catholics who are truly Catholics are not liberal; and those who are truly liberal are not Catholics."<sup>(9)</sup> So says M. Veuillot, the French champion of the papacy.

In Belgium there is a struggle going on, such as to threaten the existence of constitutional government.

"If the clergy, by means of the confessional, succeeds in naming to elective functions the men of its choice, it becomes master of all authority; and by its agency it is really the Pope who governs. In Belgium this goal is almost reached. The Catholic electors obey their vicars, the vicars obey the bishops, the bishops obey the Pope. Thus the Catholic representatives (in Parliament) are delegates of the episcopacy, and the Primate of Belgium, the archbishop of Malines, is the true sovereign, since he can direct as he pleases the majority of the Parliament, which makes laws, elects ministers, and governs." Only one more step is needed: let universal suffrage be granted, and the superstitious peasants and labourers will swamp all the other classes. Then, liberal and constitutional government will be impossible. Who knows whe-

ther the more thoughtful classes will not under such circumstances, throw their country into the arms of France, rather than see it engulfed in the superstitions of Rome.

Even as it is, convents are multiplying. Between 1856 and 1866 the monks and nuns doubled their numbers. They use the fears of purgatory and confessions on deathbeds, to increase their riches.

The clergy also, carefully shut out political light. Liberal newspapers are forbidden: taverns which took them in would be denounced by the priests, deserted, and ruined. Even in towns of great importance, the clergy regulate the list of books to be offered for sale. In great places, of 25,000 to 50,000 inhabitants, the booksellers are restrained from selling secular works, and are limited to prayer-books, accounts of miracles, and pious images. In Bruges, Courtray, Ypres, Saint-Nicolas, Alost, you ask in vain for those publications which you find in the mere villages of Holland and Germany.

On the other hand, I find it stated by an impartial observer that in the South of France, a good priest is more effective than ten *gens-d'armes*. I know too, that in Ireland, many Protestant families, not only have Roman Catholic servants, but decline to have any others.

I cannot then, join in any indiscriminate abuse of the Papacy and its adherents. On the other hand, I cannot forget that its teaching, judged by modern enlightenment, is antiquated and slavish. Let two examples suffice.

1. The present Pope, the infallible Pío Nono, has

lately been using the following prayer in behalf of France.

“O MARY, conceived without sin, look down upon France; pray for France; O save France. The greater its guilt, the greater its need of thy intercession. A single word to JESUS, reclining in thine arms, and France is saved. O JESUS, obey MARY, and save France!”<sup>(1)</sup>

It is wonderful that the Pope should have permitted this barefaced, monstrous Mariolatry, to be divulged. But such has been his blundering honesty through his long and fatal reign: “right-hearted, wrongheaded” Pius! What must be the distress of Dr. Newman! whose simple sincerity will not allow him to pretend, that his severe English taste has been corrupted into sympathy with this fulsome southern pietism.

Protestant youths, taught as children to read and understand the Bible, would loathe this woman-worship. They might accept the heresy of Nestorius, who contended that the Virgin was the mother of only the human body of JESUS CHRIST: but to call her the mother and present director of God, would appear to them childish or preposterous.

2. The unchanging Church still holds and nakedly preaches, its old doctrine as to our condition after death. A wandering Protestant lately heard a sermon on this topic.<sup>(2)</sup> The preacher, a man “of imposing appearance,” discoursed on the state of souls in purgatory; and drew a harrowing picture, in language, fluent, eloquent, and with the tone of sincerity.

“For untold years—so he said—the wretched

souls in purgatory will endure sufferings inconceivable to the human mind. The physical tortures of hell he pronounced to be not so great as the spiritual agony of the souls cut off for an indefinite, though not an infinite, period from the sight of God. Their one consolation will be the memory of the last look of their SAVIOUR when they received their judgment, and the consequent assurance that some day the doors of their torture-house will be open."

So far there was nothing more shocking, than the coarse preaching at a Calvinistic or Wesleyan revival. It might be listened to by a Protestant; who would ask however, what was the authority for this doctrine of purgatory; and who would not be satisfied with the reply:—the tradition of the Church. Ignorant of the Bible, he might accept the reply: knowing the Bible, he would reject it.

As the preacher went on however, he developed the doctrine, and deduced the consequences. These souls in purgatory could do nothing for themselves: their relief must come from without. It must come too, from the charitable efforts of men. "It was as certain that among those victims of the Divine wrath were many who had sat upon these chapel benches, as that we were sitting in their place. Compassion, then, bound us to help our departed friends, mothers, wives and husbands. Justice bound us to help those who had been encouraged by our evil communications to the venial sins which they were expiating; even regard for our own interests bound us to help those who, when they had reached a happier place, might render a similar service to us in our turn."



But how could the hearers play their part in this work of liberation? By works of supererogation, by purchasing masses, by the use of holy water.

A youth familiar with the Bible, would not readily allow the traditions of the Church to convince him, that by penances and alms-giving he could amass a superfluous stock of good works, which he might apply to the emancipation of souls in purgatory. The doctrine of substitution indeed, is admitted by most Christian churches: but it is the substitution of a divine person for a human; of a God for a man; not of one man for another.

As to the redemption of souls by the pattering of masses, that the instructed youth would find still more repugnant. Presented to the common eye of day, the practice has a monstrous look. Within the last two or three years, it has made its appearance in a Paris court of justice. A compassionate man had contracted with a priest, at a fixed price, for so many score masses in favour of a certain soul known to be in purgatory. The purchaser had reason to believe that the stipulated number of masses had not been said; and he brought his action accordingly. The law recognized the validity of the contract, and the priest was called on for his defence. He pleaded that he had been too busy to say all the masses himself; and that therefore, he had sublet his contract to other priests, who living out of Paris, had more time on their hands. The masses he averred, had been performed.

Do we smile at this bargain and sale of the soul's salvation? Does it move our Protestant contempt,

to find men believing that our condition hereafter will be determined by the mutterings and genuflexions bought with francs or sovereigns? Do we desire that these degrading superstitions should again get possession of our working classes? Or are we bent on raising up a barrier against them? Then let all be taught to read and understand the Bible.

The Romish priests will tell you how powerful is this remedy. The man of an imposing presence, who preached the sermon on purgatory, "lamented the withering effect of English Protestantism in regard to this field for the manifestation of Catholic zeal. The foundations that once provided prayers for the dead, were confiscated by a person who has probably gone to a place where even prayers would be useless."

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Another practice which Protestants regard as superstitious, is the use of consecrated water. It is indeed the substance of an English proverb, according to which we may say, that the Political Dissenters hate the Church as the devil hates holy water.

The use of holy water is not obsolete: on the contrary, it flourishes: it is approved by high authorities.<sup>(9)</sup> So late as 1866, there appeared a third edition of a work on the subject; written "by Monsignor Gaume, a French ecclesiastic, an Apostolic Prothonotary, a Bishop *in partibus*." "This work is so highly approved by the present Pope, that on the appearance of the edition of March 1866,

he addressed a special congratulatory letter to Monsignor Gaume, and nine days after was published a Papal brief, '*Ad perpetuam rei memoriam*' to encourage the greater use of holy water (*aquæ et salis consecratio*)."

Now let us see the specific uses of this blessed water.

1. It liberates man from the necessity of undergoing penances to which he is liable. "Each time the faithful shall make the sign of the cross with it on themselves, invoking the Holy Trinity, one hundred days of indulgence are secured from all penances imposed or to which they may be liable."

2. It is applicable to a more awful purpose. "The Holy Father grants that these indulgences may be applied by way of suffrage to the souls of Christians who have quitted this world to lessen the pains of purgatory." Monsignor Gaume explains this.— "What means are there by which miserable souls may be spared the expiatory flames of purgatory?" The answer from all Christian ages is, "Holy Water!"

"We are told that Providence has taken care to justify the views of the Church by facts; for St. Martin, one of the Canons of Liège, during his life-time conversed familiarly with the soul of a priest detained in purgatory, which told him that every time the faithful threw holy water on his tomb, his sufferings diminished. 'We feel (said the soul) as they feel on earth when in very hot weather they use fresh water to drink or wash.'"

These are the modern, the recent, the present doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.



Monsignor Gaume incidentally enlightens us on other matters.

"In the present age millions of demons surround us, and are more enterprising than ever, and we are apt to be too familiar with them. The circumambient air is full of demons (p. 305), and to these demons the Church attributes most of the tempests, water-spouts, and hurricanes that take place; especially if a storm should interrupt a sermon. Haunted houses and places are especially infested with devils (p. 317). Flights of locusts, blights, plague, cholera, potato disease, cattle disease, and vine disease are enumerated as works of these demons. The mythological gods were real devils in disguise, and the ceremonies and worship devoted to them, particularly the use of lustral water and libations, were inventions of the devil, arising from his predilection for imitating by anticipation the true worship of the Deity and real holy water. Ceres, Minerva, Bacchus, and Neptune still exist, though these demons are now less familiar with mankind."

"Monsignor Gaume proceeds to explain that the scientific knowledge of our forefathers was more advanced than ours. He asks, What is water? Modern science answers protoxyde of hydrogen. Very edifying! he sarcastically observes. But if we ask the same question of ancient science—that is, the *true* science—we are told that water is the mother of the world. The sky is only vaporized water, and the earth water solidified, or in the concrete state. Our bodies are coagulated water, and so are animals and plants."



Another Roman Catholic practice seems to us superstitious, hateful, and dangerous: I mean the dedication of children to the Virgin Mary. The readers of that wonderful romance, the Tichborne trial, will remember that the heir to the baronetcy had been thus dedicated in childhood by his French mother. A really distinguished man of the last century, the Marquis Condorcet, had suffered from the same folly.<sup>(4)</sup> He early lost his father.

“He was left to the guardianship of his mother, whom Arago describes as a devotee of the weakest credulity, and his father’s elder brother, the Bishop of Lisieux, a prelate of considerable distinction, and notable not least for his Jesuitic connexions, tenets, and zeal. The lady, not being interfered with at first, devoted her son by some formal act to the special service of the Virgin, and, the better to guard his consecrated infancy, had him clothed like a girl. Till his twelfth year he was constantly disguised in a white frock and petticoat, and had little misses for his only playmates — a probation sufficient, in M. Arago’s opinion, to account for some peculiarities both in the *physique* and the *moral* of his manhood. The abstinence from all rude boyish sports, we are told, checked the proper muscular development of his limbs; the head and trunk were on a large scale, but the legs were so meagre that they seemed unfit to carry what was above them, and in fact he never could partake in any strong exercise or undergo the bodily fatigues to which healthy men expose themselves. On the other hand he had imbibed the tender-heartedness of a delicate damsel. . . . As to insects, says M. Arago, he never would kill

them, *unless indeed, they occasioned him particular inconvenience.*"

Like Condorcet, the young heir to a baronetcy went about Paris in frock and petticoat. He too had defective legs, but no one has ventured to suggest that this misfortune was owing to the virginal dedication. He certainly did not share Condorcet's extreme tenderness to animals.

But for boys, what treatment could be worse? What better fitted to produce by a natural reaction, a youth of rebellion and wildness; Condorcet escaped: Tichborne as it alleged was not so fortunate.

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For myself, I make no pretension to missionary zeal: but I detest superstition, and I abhor priestcraft. I have no love of revivals and pietistic hymns: but I dread far more the anodynes sold by friars, black, white and grey, with all their trumpery.

I say to secularists even of the coarsest type:—however little you yourselves believe, you see that as a matter of fact, the mass of men will have a faith; will believe that there is a God, and that the soul has an existence after death. For such men, weak and superstitious if you like, which faith is the best? Protestant individualism, which says, work out your own salvation; or Romish priestcraft, which for a money consideration will draw you out of purgatory?

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Let us not forget what has been said by Professor Huxley. Few men of any note have so unblushingly

denounced popular theology, and declared the Bible unworthy of what divines call belief. As a member of the London School Board too, he has with some bitterness joined in the denunciations of denominational teaching. Yet let us hear his opinions as we learn them from his friend Professor Tyndall.<sup>(5)</sup>

"I can give you the most emphatic assurance that Professor Huxley does not hate the Bible. Like myself, he rather loves and reverences the grand old book. I once heard him say, in regard to the education of his own children, that if nobody else could be found to do it, he would teach them the Bible himself. In a competitive examination upon the Scriptures, canonical and uncanonical, I would back Mr. Huxley against nine-tenths of the clergy. I say 'uncanonical' because he has also the Apocrypha at his fingers' ends. I never heard a heartier Amen! than I did from him in response to some passage in the Baptismal Service at the christening of one of his boys. He had no notion that I should tell you this; and bear well in mind that I do not mention it to bamboozle or hoodwink you into the notion that either of us has any sympathy with the current theological notions regarding either the Bible or the Baptismal Service. I mention it to illustrate to you that large-heartedness and freedom from bigotry which, even now, enable Mr. Huxley to feel and respond to much that is noble and beautiful in the creed of his youth."

And in an article written for the *Contemporary Review*, Mr. Huxley says.<sup>(6)</sup> "Now, my belief is, that no human being, and no society composed of human beings ever did, or ever will, come to much



unless their conduct was governed and guided by the love of some ethical ideal. Undoubtedly your gutter child may be converted by mere intellectual drill into "the subtlest of all the beasts of the field;" but we know what has become of the original of that description, and there is no need to increase the number of those who imitate him successfully without the aid of the rates. And if I was compelled to choose for one of my children between a school in which real religious instruction is given, and one without it, I should prefer the former, even though the child had to take a good deal of theology with it. Nine-tenths of a dose of bark is mere half-rotten wood; but one swallows it for the sake of the particles of quinine, the beneficial effect of which may be weakened, but is not destroyed, unless in a few cases of exceptionally tender stomachs. Hence, when the great mass of the English people declare that they want to have the children in the elementary schools taught the Bible, and when it is plain from the terms of the Act, the debates in and out of Parliament, and especially the emphatic declaration of the Vice-President of the Council, that it was intended that such Bible reading should be permitted unless good cause for prohibiting it could be shown, I do not see what reason there is for opposing that wish. Certainly, I, individually, could with no shadow of consistency oppose the teaching of the children of other people to do that which my own children are taught to do. And if the reading the Bible were not, as I think it is, consonant with political reason and justice, and with a desire to act in the spirit of the education measure, I am disposed to think that



it might be well still to read that book in the elementary schools. I have always been strongly in favour of secular education, in the sense of education without theology; but I must confess I have been no less strongly perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling, which is the essential basis of conduct, was to be kept up, in the present utterly chaotic state of opinion on these matters, without the use of the Bible."

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To these arguments, the Irreconcilables eagerly reply, that I misrepresent many or all of them, if I mean it to be understood that they are enemies of religious teaching. Some of them angrily protest against being confounded with Professors Tyndall and Huxley, as men who merely do not hate the Bible but "rather love and reverence the grand old book." They asseverate their unhesitating belief in the Bible, as the inspired word of God and the instrument of man's salvation.

The question then, is not *whether* religion ought to be taught, but *where* it ought to be taught. I say it should be part of the daily instruction: they say it should be left to the parents and to Sundays.

I confess that if I could shut my eyes to facts, I should be of the same opinion. We give up one day in seven to bodily rest and religious exercise: this ought to suffice for the necessary teaching. So it does in educated and well conducted families, where the children are early imbued with religious notions and in due time taken to a place of worship. But such families are exceptional among the working classes.

This distinction between the educated and the working classes, was brought into relief at the school-board election. Birmingham has long had an excellent Proprietary School; one of the few that has held its ground out of the many established thirty years ago. The school has always been distinguished by the absolute exclusion of religious teaching. My own sons have been educated there, and I have taken an active part in the management. I was taunted with inconsistency in thus supporting a purely secular school for the middle classes, while requiring that the Board Schools should give religious instruction.

I replied by narrating what had happened some years before. At an annual meeting of the school, among the gentlemen present was the Rev. John Angell James, a distinguished Congregationalist of the old temper: a serious Christian, decrying pomps and vanities and worldly pleasures; whose admirable sermons all turned upon one central text: "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

The Head Master (the eminent linguist Dr. Badham) dwelt at some length on the absence of religious teaching; and went on to say that he wished the same practice was found in all schools, whether for rich or poor. Mr. James, who was there as a looker-on, rose to protest against its being supposed that he shared Dr. Badham's sentiments. For, he said, while he thought it expedient and right that religious teaching should be excluded from this school, he should be most unwilling to adopt that practice in primary schools. Here it was



advantageous, in bringing together the sons of Churchmen and Nonconformists, of Jews, Unitarians, Baptists and Independents: a mixture making it possible to carry on the institution notwithstanding the attractions of the Free Grammar-School, and tending besides to instil real tolerance into the boys' minds. But these were sons of educated parents, who either themselves taught their families religion, or took care that they were taught; and who by a judicious use of the Sunday, left the other six days free for secular instruction. The case of the working classes, said Mr. James, is quite different: the parents in these classes do not, will not, and for the most part cannot communicate religious knowledge to their children; and these therefore, must either acquire this knowledge at school, or grow up as heathens.

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Again; we are told that the Board Schools will not trench on the Sunday, which will remain free for religious teaching: let the children go to Sunday-schools. These too, it is added, finding the reading and writing well taught during the weekdays, will be at liberty to devote their whole time to Bible teaching.

It remains to be seen whether Sunday-schools will flourish under the new regime: or whether parents will excuse their children from attending them, when they see their education given on other days. Even at present, such schools are poorly taught, under the general superintendence of the minister of religion on his busiest day, and by amateur teachers

often incompetent, and always rendering gratuitous services; that is services rendered for nothing and very dear at the price.

Hereafter, at some remote distance of time, the working classes may devote themselves efficiently to the religious instruction of their children. Or it may turn out that Sunday-schools will flourish instead of fading. In this latter case, it is just possible that religious teaching in Board Schools may be dispensed with.

I have much sympathy with those who desire such a consummation on the ground that religion and religious teaching ought not to be regarded as the same. It is in fact an unsatisfactory thing to see boys taking a lesson in the Bible, with thumbed, dog-eared books, painfully spelling out the words, with a cane brandished over their heads. It would be far more beneficial to have week-day religion suggested by the excellent conduct of the master, and Sunday teaching given in a gentle and attractive spirit. Generations hence, religion may be so understood as to add new charms to life and to allay the terrors of death. The divine being may really be regarded as a God of love, and not as a mere stern, austere, avenging judge. The New Testament may at length supersede the Old.

But at present Sunday teaching is more theological than religious. It inculcates highly coloured, enthusiastic, fanatic, superstitious notions, which corrupt children's minds almost as much as they strengthen them: whereas the religious and moral instruction given in Board Schools, must from the



restraints put upon the teachers, be moderate and reasonable, and unsectarian.

## v.

AMONG the bitter disputes at the Boards, the bitterest has been the one growing out of the application of the compulsory laws.

It has long been seen that universal instruction cannot be attained without pressure on the parents. There are persons in considerable numbers, who regard schooling as we of the middle classes regard a university education: as a thing excellent in itself but reserved for the rich: a superfluity if not a luxury. Send my son to school? Yes! but first let me have my beer and tobacco, my saint Monday, and my jollification. Or, let me save enough to buy some houses, and protect my old age from want and the union.

The cry for a general measure of compulsion, came at first from the Irreconcilable party. Men of more penetration saw breakers ahead. They contended that it was dangerous at once to call on agricultural labourers as well as mechanics, to send all their children to school: for they knew that the labourers getting their 10s. 12s. or even 14s. a week, would in cases of large families be reduced to want by such compulsion; and they foresaw failure and discredit in a law sure to be disregarded. They maintained that it was better for us to feel our way with slow and hesitating steps. The Factory Acts had lately been applied to the hardware trades, and this extension would bring in many half-timers,

who would necessarily receive some instruction. If all trades and employments could be brought under those Acts, there would be an inconsiderable number of children left, requiring compulsion.

It turned out however, that in many great towns, not only the educated classes, but the working men themselves, called for a compulsory law. To throw away the opportunity would be improvident. On the other hand, to pass a general law would be dangerous. Mr. Forster's Act steered between the rocks and the whirlpool, by leaving the application of the compulsory powers to the discretion of each Board.

In most great towns it was agreed that compulsion ought to be put in force. Just at first no difficulty was apprehended: but sectarian bitterness soon found an arena (not a field) for its exercise.

Compulsion by all means: but then as to the parents too poor to pay the school pence.—“Pay for them.”—What! out of the rates?—“Why not?”—Because the present schools are denominational; they teach religion and even theology: we will pay no rates to teach the Roman Catholic or the Church of England religion.

This was a charming invention for the Irreconcilables: and it had the merit of being new. Some years before, a society had been established in Manchester for urging neglected children to school, and paying the fees of the destitute. The lead had been followed in Birmingham: where however, the society had been wound up in 1870, with the explanation that the School Board would hereafter do the work.

The Education Society had paid fees to schools of all denominations: it was assumed that the Board would do the same: the Irreconcilables had taken an active part in the Education Society, and they had shared the hope of handing over its work to the Board.

But this temptation to the manufacture of a grievance, was not to be resisted. What an opportunity for declamation and invective! To be sure, there were thousands of young creatures playing in the gutter: there were thousands of vacancies in schools pronounced good by the Government Inspectors: let the children fill the vacancies and they would be well taught; leave things alone and these children would be for life disgracefully ignorant. No matter: principle for ever! No compromise! Not a farthing of the rates must go to teach the creed or the LORD's Prayer. What! take sixpence from a Jew, however incidentally, to advance the religion of the Christian pseudo-Messiah: or take sixpence from an unbeliever to advance religion of any sort!

These objections would have been less surprising if they had come from the Jews, who naturally loathe the Christian faith; or from the Roman Catholics, who doubt the possibility of salvation outside their own body; or from the few secularists, who hold that all religion is imposture and superstition. The objections too, would have been less offensive if they had been sincere. But in the discussion of them the truth came out: the objectors acknowledged that what they really dreaded was the strengthening of the present denominational schools, by filling their vacancies with these idle children.



The expression used was denominational schools: the thing intended was Church schools. For the greater part of the public elementary teaching in towns has been hitherto accomplished by clergymen. The dissenters generally, with the exception of the Wesleyans, held till recently that education, like religion, should be let alone by the Government. Acting on this dogma, they left the clergy to nearly engross the public elementary teaching. When they suddenly awoke to what they had done, it was too late: the Church had possession of the field. This has embittered the dissenters' minds: with many honourable exceptions, they resolved to move the country and Parliament to deprive the Church schools of the aid hitherto given them. In vain you pointed out to them that by using the compulsory powers, scores of thousands of children would be saved from ignorance: the cry, down with Church schools, prevailed over pity and public spirit. It is truly said that they hate the Church more than they love the children.

There are Nonconformists who feel kindly towards the Church, believing that notwithstanding some erroneous doctrines and superstitious practices it is doing a good civilizing work. The following letter is an example of this really liberal spirit.

"To the Committee of the Manchester Branch of the Liberation Society.

"Gentlemen—Your note, received only this morning, inviting me to a conference of the Liberation Society in the Town Hall, Manchester, on Thursday next, the 17th instant, gives me the opportunity of thanking you for your courtesy, and also of



saying that the observation and thought of above forty years as a dissenting minister, convince me that the success of your society would be detrimental to the moral and social welfare of the English people. I have been led to differ widely from the Established Church in doctrines, but I am one with it in maintaining the great benefits of the parochial system, and in the desirableness, on public grounds, of maintaining the Episcopal form of Church government. Of religious liberty I possess almost as much as I need. I stand under the old sycamore tree near my old chapel, and never tremble that any man should make me afraid. I have freedom to follow all my duties as a minister—I can christen, marry, bury, administer the sacrament, pray in any form of words I choose, and preach whatever I believe to be true; I can do all these things without fine, penalty, or imprisonment; and as far as I can judge, I am not in any sense a slave that I should seek liberation. I am in my thought and in my conscience free, and daily do I bless God for the noble privilege; and because I am myself thus free, I do not aim at invading my neighbours, or at appropriating to any other than religious and charitable uses the revenues and rights of my brethren of the Established Church of England. I am, gentlemen, faithfully yours—

“Knutsford, Cheshire.”

“HENRY GREEN.”

The Political Dissenters however, shut their eyes to the good done, and shout, as Voltaire did against the oppressive Roman Catholic church, *écrasez l'infâme!* Down with the beast!

In the case of the schools they were ashamed of this hostility, which came out only in the heat of debate, and from the mouths of the indiscreet. The cautious men confined themselves to the objection, that the rates should not be applied to teaching religion.

If this had been the real instead of the ostensible grievance, it would have been easily redressed. A certain school devotes half an hour a day to teaching religion, in a day of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  hours. In any allowances made from the rates, let a deduction of one-eleventh be made: the ten-elevenths would go altogether to pay for secular teaching.

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But though this payment for teaching religion, was not the real grievance, it was the one put forward, as supplying a sort of reason for refusing to send destitute children to denominational schools. Board Schools, it was said, would be built in a year or two: when that was done the destitute children might be sent to those schools, where no denominational religion would be taught.

But in the mean time compulsion would be impossible.—“It can wait a year or two.”—And scores of thousands of children are remaining untaught.—“A great evil; but not to be compared with the evil of violating our squeamish consciences.”—And the church schools are deprived of the additional scholars and funds.—“So much the better: a weakening of the enemy.”—To such lengths has faction carried men professing to be Christians, and some of them Christian preachers! Is it not truly said that hatred



of the church outweighed love of the children? But for the teaching of experience and history, it would be hard to conceive how men uttering such sentiments at the Board to day, can go to morrow and preach to their congregations on Christian charity, forbearance, and brotherly love. Let them take for their text:—See how these Christians hate!

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Even however, when the Board Schools are all built, there will still be insuperable objections to requiring destitute children to go to them. In fact, there are places where no Board Schools will be found. Stockport, for example, will have none, because it is amply provided with denominational schools: to these therefore the destitute children must be sent.

But take an ordinary town, where the Board may be supposed to have ten or twenty schools. Go into the Irish quarter, where most of the inhabitants are Roman Catholics. You order a hodman to send his son to school: he proves his poverty, and you agree to pay the weekly pence. His priest has a school, and one under the government inspection, close at hand; the hodman will send his son to it. You object, and tell him he must use the Board school. He pleads his conscience, and declares that he dare not pass by his priest and send his son to be taught by heretics. You summon him to the Police-Court; will a Stipendiary, or will the unpaid magistrates dare to commit him?

A second case. I have said that Stockport will have no Board School. In less fortunate towns, there

will be quarters which will have no such schools. You visit a sick mechanic in one of these quarters. His children have hitherto gone to the school of the Wesleyan church, to which the father is attached. You tell him that now you are about to pay the pence, he must remove them to a board-school. But there is no such thing in his quarter. No matter: there is one within half or three-quarters of a mile. The poor man sighs and submits: he regrets to have to leave the church of his adoption, but he is of a peaceable disposition.

Now the children will not attend this new place with such good will as to make it of much use to them. Their own familiar school was close at hand; they could run in without attendance: some one must take them to the board-school, through half or three-quarters of a mile of crowded streets. In rainy weather, better shoes and more outside coverings are necessary for such a distance; and by the supposition the family is very poor.

It comes to this: a man must be allowed to send his children to the nearest good school which he approves of.

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There is another rather serious objection to dictating the adoption of the Board-School. In most cases this would involve a change from one school to another; since the denominational schools will always be by far the more numerous.

Now, changing from one school to another is an evil; among the working classes generally, the habit of such change on the slightest occasion is a great evil. It is one form of that irregularity of attend-



ance which is the present bane of education. We have some of the best machinery in the world: good buildings; well trained teachers; thorough inspection and examination. The few boys and girls who attend with regularity at one school for a term of years, are well taught. But the greater number, besides staying away half their time, shift from the Wesleyan to the Church, and from the Church to the Congregationalist: they are always beginning, and make no progress.

What is the duty of the Board? To correct this carelessness and this vagrancy: first to insist on regularity of attendance; next to prevent, so far as is possible, the change from place to place. The Board has no power, so far as I know, to require a parent to name a school and send his children to it for a given time: but at any rate, it can exercise its influence in that direction.

But the Irreconcilables ask the Board to use its influence in the opposite direction; and thus to aggravate the ills from which we suffer. A sick mechanic has a son at the Wesleyan school; the Board should require his continuance there. "Keep your son where he is, and we will pay the pence." No, say the Political Dissenters, if you keep your son there, we will not pay the pence: we want to teach you the easy art of shifting.

The case would be different if the Board undertook to pay the pence permanently: then, the son would become a regular pupil at the new school. But this cannot be done. The law allows a grant of pence only for a limited time: at the most six months; (renewable no doubt, in certain cases).<sup>(7)</sup>

My conclusion is that the choice of schools for destitute children, must be left to the parents: that it will be fatal to the practice of compulsion to require a Roman Catholic father to pass by his priest's school; to require any parent to send his children to a distant Board-School; to require, or even to allow children to be removed from their accustomed schools.

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The Political Dissenters know the value of a cry: none know it better. So they have taken to shouting at the top of their voices:—"no church-rate!"

A church-rate! What is a church-rate? A rate levied for the benefit of the Church: that is the Church of England. And this rate? A rate levied for sending children to the schools of the Church of England, of the Church of Rome, of the Wesleyans, of the Baptists, of all denominations that have schools. At the least, truth might have required the cry to be:—"no churches-rate!"

A church-rate is applicable to keeping in repair the fabric of the churches; to tending the churchyards; to paying the beadle's wages: this new rate is applicable to paying pence for poor children's education. These pence, it may be said, go to the funds of the schools. No doubt they do. They help to pay for repairs and for the teachers' services. But a school-house is not a church: a schoolmaster is not a clergyman. The rate required is a school-rate.

It happens no doubt, that the Church of England has a very large number of day-schools. But the

Roman Catholics also have a considerable number : so have the Wesleyans. The school-rate will be distributed among all these denominations.

Even the Congregationalists and the Baptists have day-schools. They ought to have had a great many : but their refusal to receive Government aid and to submit to Government inspection, has ruined their schools. A very few years ago, they discovered their mistake, and expressed their willingness to submit to the Government scheme. It was too late : the ground was occupied. Thus the new school-rate will go to them in a very small proportion.

Ill-natured people say that if these excellent "orthodox dissenters" had had their fair share of day-schools, they would have raised no dishonest cry, such as "a new church-rate!" but would have quietly accepted their portion of the pence. Now, finding the poor figure they cut, they are retiring from the struggle : offering their schools to the Board or closing them.

They cover this retreat by declaring that there ought to be no private or denominational schools, and that all education should be given in public schools supported by taxes.

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These gentlemen belong to the liberal party. That party has always declaimed against Centralization : has maintained that Government should never intervene unless under absolute necessity : has held firm to the doctrine that individuals and local bodies should be encouraged to be as far as possible independent of all assistance. Now, actuated by passion-



ate pique, these same liberals are crying out for the abolition of all the present schools locally supported; and for the establishment of a grand universal national system. Is it then desirable to get a dead level, an unbroken uniformity, in the minds of this country, hitherto distinguished for the wholesome variety of its intellects and humours?

And for what? To spare the dissenters the pain of seeing themselves beaten in the educational race. I cannot see without indignation this exhibition of envy and jealousy. I do not pretend that I am any partisan of the clergy, or especially of the town clergy, who mostly preach those Augustinian doctrines which I dislike. But when I go into their parishes, and find them doing their duty faithfully; visiting the sick, aiding the destitute, comforting the afflicted, painfully collecting funds for building and maintaining schools, often on a vast scale: I forget their sickly Sunday discourses, and deem them true apostles of civilization: I overlook their narrowness and their unthinking enmity to intellectual progress, and I pronounce them invaluable benefactors of the human race. I would that mankind were so advanced as to allow us to dispense with such a class especially set apart, but until this utopian dream is realized, let us cherish and back up the members of it. Let us not say to them, as we are asked to say: we will no longer accept your laborious services in educating the poor.

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The past fifty years have seen divers strange political conversions: many great statesmen have



effected Lord Castlereagh's well known feat, of turning their backs upon themselves. But most of the changes have been only relaxations of the severe Toryism of the thirty years which preceded; when war and the burdens it left behind forced the nation into a conservative mould.

The Orthodox Dissenters of the present generation have followed these examples, and have executed strange gyrations.

Thirty years ago, certain educationists induced the administration of the day to make a feeble trial of assisting and inspecting schools. The practice grew slowly. In the year 1848 the total amount expended was little more than . . . £83,000. After that year it made rapid advances, and reached in 1861 . . . £813,000. This considerable outlay, and the prospects of further increase, were alarming. Mr. Disraeli, if I remember right, without objecting to the plan, pointed out as a fact, that the expenditure might in a few years reach 3 millions.

The partisans of the doctrine *laissez-faire, laissez-passer*, grumblingly declared that Government had no more right to interfere in education than in religion. The Church of England, the Wesleyans, the Roman Catholics, thankfully accepted the aid, and submitted (often unwillingly) to the conditions attached. But the other dissenters stood aloof. They would not have Government interfere with their chapels and schools: they preferred managing their own affairs. Besides; they would have no instruction without religion as a part: they denounced "godless" education.

Since then, what a wondrous change! Then, they decried Government intervention: all instruction must be communicated by the efforts of private persons or religious bodies. Now they bawl for a national system, free and compulsory. Government was to be nothing: it is to be everything.

Religion at that time, was the essential part of all teaching. Now, education is to be purely secular; not even the reading of the Bible is to be tolerated, without note or verbal explanation. Godless teaching is now the desire of the successors of Raffles, Robert Hall, and Angell James.

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The dissenters have hitherto claimed to be eminently Protestant: they have denounced the pretensions of all priesthoods. Every man was to teach religion to his own family: every schoolmaster was to teach it to his boys. Now, the schoolmaster is to be debarred from that duty. All religious instruction is to be given on Sundays, by ministers of religion, or under their superintendence. I say all, because as I have already said, among the working classes parents are unable to give it.

This magnifying of the ministers of religion, is, I know, very distasteful to certain members of the Church of England; men who though they are sincere churchmen by birth, by habit, by preference, are steadfastly opposed to the sacerdotal claims of the clergy. These true Protestants stoutly maintain the franchises of the laity; and look upon it as an evil thing, tending to superstition, to tell children that religious instruction is a thing of Sundays and



priests, and that working-days and laymen have nothing to do with it.

I am the more disposed to agree with this opinion, because I find some high-churchmen favourable to purely secular teaching in Board Schools. These men (laymen too) strenuously maintain that outside the family, no religion ought to be taught without the intervention and approval of an ordained priesthood: of those who by the laying on of hands have become authorized successors of the apostles. To protest against such Protestant-Popery, let us persist in authorizing masters and mistresses to explain the Bible to their pupils. I will not say that the nonconformist ministers who are now preaching up godless education, do this with a view to magnify their office. Yet for these two hundred and fifty years we have known that Presbyterian is but Priest writ large. Even the mild and conservative Sir Walter Scott smiled over the Scottish proverb:—those black cattle are kittle cattle to shoe behind.

Our black cattle are trying to persuade us that they are of a different breed. They are dropping the term Reverend, and require us to call them plain Mr. Another cloak to deceive themselves and us. They do not take to tent-making; they draw their quarterly stipends; they look for the same worship from their congregations. "Reverend" is a formal title indicating the profession of a divine, just as "Doctor" indicates the profession of a physician. To drop such titles is a fantasy with which to puzzle mankind.

There are frequent occasions no doubt, when "Mr." is more suitable than "Rev.": I mean when these

preachers of the Gospel appear on platforms and hustings to stir up the passions of the multitude; uttering sometimes recommendations of brickbats, pikes, and bludgeons. Sedition and tumult on weekdays; sermons on Sundays from the text "if a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also!" Formerly, there were bitter invectives against "political parsons." Who are the political parsons now? The Church clergy have learned better. But the lay gentlemen who preach on "Sabbath-days," draw their quarterly stipends, and give their hands to be kissed by women and youths, have stepped into the vacant places on platforms.

The present nonconformist preachers are the successors in a direct line of the Puritans: but would the progenitors recognize the offspring? Even I remember the time when gowns first appeared in dissenting pulpits. Steeple-houses were once an abomination: the new chapels vie with the churches in spires and towers, pinnacles and ornaments. Christmas Day was a human invention, not to be observed without superstition. Now, all the world keeps Christmas, and even mincepies are not eschewed. Pity, that in adopting things innocent or laudable, these new Puritans have soiled themselves with what is blamable and corrupting! Why should they pick up the habit of haunting political platforms, when that unclerical practice was abandoned by Anglican divines?

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## VI.

THE School-Boards have been established for the purpose of educating the people. To a considerable extent they will accomplish this object. But they would have accomplished it more easily and more quickly, if sectarian bitterness had not intruded itself. The Education Act and its Boards grew out of the Education League, but the parent disowns its offspring, and has made its birth the occasion of a grand demonstration of Political Dissent and nonconformist bitterness.

The change in the relations of Church and Dissent has been rapid and great. Forty years ago, the nonconformists were rejoicing in a recent triumph. Just before that time, no man could become a magistrate without partaking of the Communion in a church. Then came the emancipation of the Roman Catholics. The new Marriage Act relieved the dissenters from the necessity of submitting to the Church service for matrimony. Some years later the Jews were admitted to Parliament and to the rights of citizens. To crown all, the old universities of Oxford and Cambridge are now wide open to men of all creeds or of no creed, without even a question asked.

In the last century, the nonconformists were contented with toleration: they were satisfied, so long as every one could worship, preach, and print as he pleased. Having made this ground secure, they advanced to a demand for equality:—why should any disability attend on a conscientious departure from the old creed? But so long as the Church

is the Church by law established, they feel some inequality: therefore they cry, down with the Church!

Is it supposed that any new law, whether disestablishing or disendowing, would do what they want? The grievance is not one of money or power, but of sentiment; it is the sense of social predominance and contempt. Take away from the Church all you possibly could, you would leave her strong in the affections of her people: the Queen, the court, the gentry, would not suddenly become Baptists or Congregationalists; they would continue to be church people. The social predominance, the contempt, would be aggravated by the bitterness of defeat. To disestablish and disendow the Church, would gratify the spleen of the Political Dissenters: it would not lighten their social disabilities.

The true cure for these is Comprehension. Bring all into the fold, and the distinction between church and dissent vanishes. "How?" I confess the difficulty, but I do not therefore despair. I should have anticipated insuperable obstacles to repealing the Test and Corporation Acts, to emancipating the Roman Catholics, to naturalizing the Jews, to relaxing the marriage code, to opening the universities: yet these changes have all been accomplished. Such marvellous success should encourage us.

Though I do not belong to the nonconformists, I hate the distinction between them and churchmen. But I would never consent to remove it by disestablishment, until I was certain that Comprehension was impossible.

Comprehension impossible! One might have thought so a few years ago; when no dissenters



could graduate at Cambridge, or even matriculate at Oxford. But now that the highest honours are open to all, without even a question asked as to a man's belief, why should we despair of further progress ?

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One great obstacle to comprehension is the necessity of agreeing upon some creed. This is aggravated by the present form of subscription. A man is required to declare his assent to thirty-nine articles at least. The better the man, the greater the difficulty: a blockhead thinks he believes ; a knave cares nothing about the matter.

It has long seemed to me that though we cannot force this entrenchment of bigotry, we may turn it.

The thirty-nine articles and the formularies, contain declarations of opinion on various questions ; some simple and fundamental, others most perplexing and, in the eyes of many excellent persons, of small importance. We now require a young man to say solemnly that he agrees with the Church in all these declarations. The stupid, the careless, the unprincipled man makes no difficulty. But clever, thoughtful youths, are often scrupulous and sometimes squeamish in matters of conscience. Dr. Arnold I think, was at one time besieged by doubts, invited probably by the recollection that he had assented to a number of opinions on both sides of which much might be said. He confessed that he found it necessary to forcibly turn his mind to something else, and to put down these fastidious promptings.

Many readers will regard this conduct as inconsistent with the singular honesty of Dr. Arnold. I



once felt this. But I recollected that there are many occasions on which one is obliged to do something like this in ordinary life. A circumstance impeaches the fidelity of a trusted agent: it is explained: no room for doubt remains: yet there is left in one's mind a rankling suspicion, a mere recurrence of the first painful impression:—what if after all the man is a rogue? Justice requires me in this case, to forcibly thrust the thought away. Dr. Arnold was convinced that his doubts were the results of a morbid condition of mind, and he treated them as they deserved by ignominious banishment.

But it seems to me that a different form of subscription would have spared Dr. Arnold his mortification, and his peril of moral corruption. I would require clergymen to merely declare that they would teach nothing inconsistent with the articles or formularies. Dr. Arnold's doubts had no reference to the fundamental truths of Christianity, and he might have taught these without even appearing to wound his conscience. As to the minor matters about which his intellect was at work, he might have deferred teaching them until he had satisfied himself. If after due consideration he had come to conclusions different from those of the Church, he would have asked further whether these were so important as to require him to resign his place as a clergyman: if he regarded them as unimportant, he would have satisfied himself by abstaining from the expression of opinions about them. He would have fulfilled his promise by teaching nothing inconsistent with Church doctrines.

But why have articles and declarations at all?

I reply that there must be a control somewhere on the opinions of preachers. In the Roman Catholic church the lower clergy are subject to the arbitrary jurisdiction of the bishop; who can remove a priest without cause assigned, from an agreeable town cure to a remote district peopled by cowherds and charcoal burners. It is said that in Ireland the lower clergy dislike the government stipends often proposed for them, because they know that the present voluntary system shelters them from the power of the bishop, who, though he may now remove them at his pleasure, cannot command the offerings of the people, which would be scantily made to an intrusive priest. In the English church the clergy are independent of their bishops. Suppose now, that no declaration were required. A certain clergyman, after being inducted into a good living, becomes enamoured of the Greek church, and preaches its doctrines: who can stop him? A second turns out to be a Baptist, a third a Unitarian, a fourth a Roman Catholic, a fifth a Jew, a sixth a Mahometan. You may say that though these men had made no declaration, they might still be proceeded against for contravening the doctrines of the Church. But prevention is better than cure: law proceedings, and ecclesiastical law proceedings in particular, are very slow. I think we may fairly demand an undertaking that a clergyman will teach nothing inconsistent with the doctrines and practices of the Church.



## VII.

I WISH the nonconformists could see on what a dangerous course they have entered. As their policy comes to be understood, their political influence with the constituencies will be more and more diminished. Until the last Reform Bill, that of 1867; the predominance of voters resided in the middle classes; and there also is the strength of dissent. Now, the working classes have the power in their hands. At present these will follow their accustomed leaders. But as they become more acquainted with the points at issue in the Boards, they will lose confidence in those leaders. Let a Roman Catholic hodman be publicly called upon to pass by his priest's school; let a Wesleyan mechanic be required during his illness to remove his children; let any poor man be forced to send his infants through half a mile of crowded streets to a Board School: there will be a cry of tyranny which will startle the leathern ears of these bigoted liberals. The working men will not go over to the Conservatives, they will stay away from the poll, or will call on some liberal of their own sentiments to come forward.

Even in Birmingham, the League's headquarters, the first election gave only a doubtful majority of one-eighth to the non-denominationalists. Since that time, there have been marked indications of a desire on the part of the mechanics to have religious instruction given in the Board Schools. As politicians, the Irreconcilables should beware.



They say they have but lately escaped, even if they yet have escaped from church persecution. Let them then, be slow in practising a new tyranny upon others. Let them give some consideration to the parents' claim to choose their children's school. Let them not disregard the desire of other parents that religion shall be taught in the Board Schools.

If the opponents of such teaching were pure secularists; if they maintained that all religion is superstition and is injurious to the world; their conduct would be intelligible. But most of them hold, and many of them preach on Sundays, that religion is something in comparison with which all earthly things are contemptible dross. Yet they leave the teaching of it to blind chance, rather than incur the risk of wounding some person's conscience by taking his farthings to propagate tenets he disapproves.

It is not pretended that even with these objectionable tenets the religion taught is dangerous or useless. How could it be so pretended? I have already stated my own distaste for evangelical sentiments in or out of the Church. But I have been obliged to confess that judged by their actions, the preachers of those sentiments are excellent and admirable: that they are men who go about doing good. Need we be afraid of instruction given by such men?

As a Protestant, I abhor the superstitious doctrines and practices of Roman Catholicism. Yet see what is said of the priests in that wonderful Apology of Dr. Newman; a man incapable of deviating by a hair's breadth from the truth.

"And next, I was struck, when I had more oppor-

tunity of judging of the Priests, by the simple faith in the Catholic Creed and system of which they always give evidence, and which they never seem to feel, in any sense at all, to be a burden. And now that I have been in the Church nineteen years, I cannot recollect hearing of a single instance in England of an infidel priest. Of course there are men from time to time, who leave the Catholic Church for another religion, but I am speaking of cases, when a man keeps a fair outside to the world and is a hollow hypocrite in his heart.

“I wonder that the self-devotion of our priests does not strike Protestants in this point of view. What do they gain by professing a Creed, in which, if my assailant is to be believed, they really do not believe? What is their reward for committing themselves to a life of self-restraint and toil, and after all to a premature and miserable death? The Irish fever cut off between Liverpool and Leeds thirty priests and more, young men in the flower of their days, old men who seemed entitled to some quiet time after their long toil. There was a bishop cut off in the North; but what had a man of his ecclesiastical rank to do with the drudgery and danger of sick calls, except that Christian faith and charity constrained him? Priests volunteered for the dangerous service. It was the same on the first coming of the cholera, that mysterious awe-inspiring infliction. If priests did not heartily believe in the Creed of the Church, then I will say that the remark of the Apostle had its fullest illustration:—‘If in this life only we have hope in CHRIST, we are of all men most miserable.’ What could support a set of hypocrites in the



presence of a deadly disorder, one of them following another in long order up the forlorn hope, and one after another perishing? And such, I may say, in its substance, is every Mission-Priest's life. He is ever ready to sacrifice himself for his people. Night and day, sick or well himself, in all weathers, off he is, on the news of a sick call. The fact of a parishioner dying without the Sacraments through his fault is terrible to him; why terrible, if he has not a deep absolute faith, which he acts upon with a free service?"

Now I cannot feel much alarm at doctrines which bear such good fruit. I cannot persuade myself to be unhappy when I see the children of Roman Catholic parents pouring into schools conducted under the superintendence of men such as Dr. Newman described. By their fruits shall ye know them. By witnessing such fruits I know that these men exhibit a self-denial and self-devotion which must act favourably on the children committed to them.

I see the same results among the evangelical churches; among the high church clergy; among Presbyterians, Baptists, Independents, and Unitarians. While I would openly controvert the Popish doctrines of Purgatory and of Works of Supererogation; the Augustinian doctrines of justification and election; the high church doctrine of the Real Objective Presence: while I would gladly substitute a moderate and reasonable Protestantism, adapted to the growing intelligence of the world: I am bound as an adherent of inductive philosophy to conclude that all the different churches have a common foun-



dation on which there spring up kindness, brotherly love, temperance, honesty, justice, reverence. We do not find this to be true of all other religions: of that of the Mormons for example; which lends itself to the unbounded voluptuousness of rich men. It was not true of the religion of Greece and Rome, where the worship of Zeus or Jupiter, of Ares or Mars, of Aphrodite or Venus, was protested against by moralists and philosophers, as teaching men to reverence tyranny, ferocity, and libertinism.

Surely, under all forms of Christianity, we may accept the good and tolerate the corruptions: finding that all our churches teach their disciples to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God (infusing a spirit of uprightness, kindness, and reverence), we may leave to time and advancing reason the determination of speculative controversies. We may be willing to aid all denominations of Christians in educating their children. While we require parents to send their children to school, we shall shrink from the tyranny of dictating to what school they shall send them. We shall give in the Board-Schools such explanation of the Bible as will satisfy the great majority of parents, leaving it free to the dissatisfied to withdraw their children from such teaching. We shall venture to hope that this religious instruction, carefully guarded as it will certainly be from superstition and fanaticism, will set an example to the world of moderation and good sense.









## Essay II.

### PAUPERS AND THEORISTS.

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**A**FTER three centuries of experiment, we still have men among us dissatisfied with our poor-law administration.

These malcontents are chiefly of three classes. There are first, the adherents of that school of social economy, which makes political wisdom consist in the science of doing nothing. Everyone for himself and God for us all, says the proverb: everyone for himself, and the State for nobody, say these disciples of a decayed school.

An habitual drunkard is dying under your windows. "*Let him die; he deserves his fate.*"

He is dead, and carried to his pauper's grave. His widow and young children are desolate, moneyless, cold and hungry. "*Let private charity see to that.*" But private alms are capricious and uncertain: will you leave the innocent to perish? "*Their fate is inevitable. The child inherits his father's dis-*

*eases : he is corrupted by his father's vices : he shares his destitution. Such is the law of nature."*

A gloomy economical creed, yours.

*"Truth is often gloomy. But in the end, falsehood is gloomier : and it will be found so in this case ; since those who disregard the laws of nature, aggravate and multiply the ills they weakly pretend to correct."*

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There are men who go a step further : audacious doctrinaires, who say brutally that all charity is a blunder. But such preposterous inhumanity is unworthy of refutation.

These very writers of cruel paradox, are as tender-hearted as their neighbours. Their conduct belies their dogmas. Let their laundress fall ill ; they send her money and medicine : let their landlady lose a child ; they are ready with needful assistance.

Thus they yield to the weakness of their nature. They are kind under protest : they are as much ashamed of charities as others of vices : they do good by stealth and would blush to find it fame.

These publicists should reconsider opinions so inconsistent with their sympathies : they should inquire whether those imagined economical laws that forbid brotherly kindness, are not superseded by those grander laws of our nature which make brotherly kindness imperative in the highest degree.

They should bethink them too, that they write under a moral responsibility. Let them remember that there are featherless bipeds, who call themselves men but are vultures in heart ; inhuman creatures who pounce on the tenet *laissez-faire laissez-passer*,



and apply it as an anodyne to the thing they call their conscience; who go on their way rejoicing when they find a gloss of philosophy spread over their corrupt instinct of selfishness.

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Malcontents of the third class, are of a different mental build. They tolerate and avowedly practise private almsgiving. They concede the necessity of a poor-law. But they deny the utility and expediency of giving relief at home: they are unflinching partisans of the workhouse test.

Familiar with the literature of Blue Books; well acquainted with the life-long impostures of paupers; deeply impressed with the peril of accustoming the labourer to the enervating sweets of unearned maintenance; these reformers would eradicate such corruptions, by doing away with doles, formal charities, and out-door relief.

Root-and-branch zealots, they are deaf to argument and even to the pathetic preaching of facts. Vainly you talk to them about the recent widow, of decent parentage and irreproachable life; who with a little timely help may tide over the first year, and afterwards maintain her young children: your fanatics are inexorable as death:—"let them come into the house."

A more intimate acquaintance with great towns, might modify this intolerant spirit, contracted for the most part in country places. An experienced guardian of Manchester or Birmingham, would say what the proposed rule means.

An artisan, thrown out of work by failure of trade,

or reduced by long illness, applies for relief; he is told to come into the house. He returns home; pawns gradually his table, chairs, bed, his tools, his own necessary clothes, and those of his wife and children. At the end of a few months the family are found naked, emaciated, suffering the slow torments of starvation. Pride! you say, which prevents the father from going into the house. A decent self-respect! I rejoin; a spirit useful, commendable, and worthy of all encouragement. Assist that man moderately, temporarily, vigilantly, and you save him from ruin, without debasing his character. Refuse assistance, and you make him a drunkard, a tramp, an outcast.

The men who preach this and other hard doctrines dare not face the results. I was lately walking near St. James's Square with an excellent friend, a theoretical upholder of these savage teachings. He denounces out-door relief, and can find no language too strong to fulminate against the givers of indiscriminate alms. We had dined comfortably in a warm room. Coming out we found the weather pinching and sleety. A half-naked girl came up and whined for money, addressing herself especially to my stately and grey-bearded companion. He stealthily slipped his hand into his pocket and gave her, I fear, silver, devoutly hoping that in thus giving alms, his right hand neighbour might not know what his left hand was doing. In vain do you drive out your natural instincts with dogma; they come back to plague you.

I offer no apology for my friend's sentimental debauch: I regard the giver of indiscriminate alms

as a person worthy of the cat. But I beseech him, and all such as he, to square their conduct with their professions; not by hardening their hearts, but by mitigating the severity of their tenets.

Certainly, it is competent for them to say that though precept without example is valueless, yet you must not demand perfect virtue even from an economist. They may remind us that stoics have been known to weep, and voluptuaries to deny themselves: that spiritual persons are sometimes worldly: that preachers of humility have been found proud, and preachers of meekness, rancorous. "Fears of the brave and follies of the wise!" They may hold that if the weakness of their own hearts sometimes betrays them into damnable error, their doctrine is none the less sound.

In such a contest, who shall be the judge? To whatever tribunal however, the cause may be referred, the first thing necessary is to ascertain the facts. My version of these will be found in the following narrative. The treatise is long as an essay, but short as a history of three hundred years.

#### I.

TO relieve distress has in all ages been accounted a duty, though among uncivilized races there is little sympathy beyond a man's own family, or his tribe. In the progress of Europe since the first Olympiad or the foundation of Rome, the acknowledged duty has extended over a largely increased area, because the abolition of slavery has effaced



that boundary which divided the citizen from his servants. The humane Athenians indeed, granted distinct rights, and legal protection for life and honour, to their male and female slaves: but the Thessalians, the Spartans, the Romans, treated their slaves as human cattle; tended and petted to-day, but to-morrow disgraced, flogged, mutilated, sold, or turned out to die.

Modern social evolution has multiplied the demands for alms, by entitling the most numerous and the poorest classes to expect relief of their distresses. When none but citizens dared to stretch out their hand for charity, the public distribution of corn and the *sportula* of the patron may have been sufficient.

The Roman Catholic Church is charged by Protestants with having corrupted the simplicity of charity, by declaring almsgiving to be a meritorious practice as important to the giver's soul as to the receiver's body: and thus diverting attention from an inquiry into the reality of distress, and lulling into security the conscience of a man who has idly given to undeserving beggars.

Even the Protestant and unsentimental Paley maintains that the exercise of our kindly instincts is a reasonable excuse for almsgiving. He would have disapproved of Archbishop Whately's alleged boast that he had never given to a beggar: for, says Paley, some may thus be left to perish, since men are sometimes overtaken by distress for which all other relief but casual alms would come too late.<sup>(1)</sup>

"Beside which, resolutions of this kind compel us to offer such violence to our humanity, as may go

near, in a little while, to suffocate the principle itself; which is a very serious consideration."

We know too well that in practice there is a great deal of indiscriminate almsgiving, the greater part of which is wasted; and indeed worse than wasted, because it encourages idleness, improvidence, and imposture, and thus causes, in the end, far more destitution than it relieves. Seeing this abuse, many men neither thoughtless nor hardhearted, condemn all charity, and venture even in writings of a high class to utter their denunciations. Cross-questioned, these very men admit that they would relieve the necessities of their own mother, brother, cousin, friend, old servant, and of anyone whose distresses were forced on their notice: but they hold that their own conduct is in many of these cases weak and wrong.

As regards casual beggars, a mendicity society is the true remedy, but it requires to be managed by industrious amateurs, and not by ill paid agents. Such a society drives away the trading mendicant, and often steps in to save the meritorious destitute. One was established with great success in my own neighbourhood forty years ago; but having done its main work of warning off the ordinary beggars, it fell into abeyance. Another, recently established, is doing its work admirably; but I fear that after a few years it will die off like other voluntary institutions.

Even without this tendency to decay, voluntary associations would be insufficient to relieve the distress which exists, because the funds could not be obtained. To raise £100,000 a year by private



contributions, beyond what is already raised for hospitals, churches, schools, would be impossible even in a great and rich town. It is true that if the poor-rate were dropped, the present ratepayers would be richer by the amount, and might if they pleased contribute it to a voluntary fund: but the greater part of them would refuse; they would plead their own poverty and their daily struggle for existence; they would leave the fund to be supplied by the affluent, or by such of the affluent as were liberally disposed, by the men who are already the supporters of voluntary charities, and in many cases to the extent of their means. The substitution of a voluntary institution for a poor-law, means toil and anxiety to a few, neglect, cold and hunger, destitution and death, to the many.

## II.

NOTWITHSTANDING these obvious truths, the English Poor-Law has been rather generally denounced.

David Hume, for example, living mostly in Scotland, where an effective legal provision was unknown, said as follows, in his Essay on *the Populousness of Ancient Nations*.<sup>(2)</sup>

“When the Roman authors complain that Italy, which formerly exported corn, became dependent on all the provinces for its daily bread, they never ascribe this alteration to the increase of its inhabitants, but to the neglect of tillage and agriculture; a natural effect of that pernicious practice of import-

ing corn, in order to distribute it *gratis* among the Roman citizens, and a very bad means of multiplying the inhabitants of any country. The *sportula*, so much talked of by Martial and Juvenal, being a present regularly made by the great lords to their smaller clients, must have had a like tendency to produce idleness, debauchery, and continual decay among the people. *The parish rates have at present the same bad consequences in England.*"

A generation later, Arthur Young, not a social and political philosopher but a practical farmer of good education, and a wide and accurate observer, wrote thus of the poor-rate in 1784.<sup>(3)</sup>

"That tax raises near two millions a year: if it contributed largely to the welfare and happiness of the lowest classes—if it was the means of smoothing some of the cruel asperities of life—of levelling the inequalities of fortune—and providing for those who were unable to support themselves—not a word should drop from my pen against a system that would, in such a case, be itself a national resource, by relieving indigence, and softening misery. But if, on the contrary, as experience has fully convinced me, it corrects no evil it did not create—relieves no indigence it did not cause—banishes no sorrow that did not flow from the folly of its own administration, and is itself the parent of the poverty it assists—in this case a very different conclusion is to be drawn. That this is fact, without prejudice or exaggeration, cannot but appear to those who have remarked the effect of industry among the poor, and who have made themselves sensible of the infinite difference between an early and habitual dependance on labour,



and that fatal one which so often takes place on parochial assistance. I am old enough now to see, in various instances, idleness, drunkenness, and dissipation, arrived at maturity in men and women, who, when young, have told me, *that the parish must maintain them, if they could not maintain themselves*—a knowledge and sentiment that never took possession of the bosom of a poor person, but it worked the very effect it foretold.”

Two years afterwards he spoke just as strongly.<sup>(4)</sup>

“Go to any town in this part of the kingdom (the south-east) without a manufacture, and where poor-rates are low; establish a woollen manufacture, let it be as flourishing as you can suppose, come twenty years hence, you will find poor-rates doubled, perhaps trebled. Is it then to be said that manufactures are mischievous? By no means: it is the poor-laws that should be condemned, and them only. *They are so grossly absurd*, that giving the poor the means of living, gives them also the power of being burthensome to others; a strong fact in the woollen fabric, because it is subject to great fluctuations. The spinning business is sometimes very good; oftentimes very bad, and then many of the poor will not do it at all, but go to the parish for maintenance rather than earn twopence at a business by which they have at another time earned a groat.”

A little earlier than Young, Adam Smith, the most sagacious of writers, thus censured the law of settlement, an essential part of the poor-laws.<sup>(5)</sup>

“The obstruction which corporation laws give to the free circulation of labour is common, I believe, to every part of Europe. That which is given to it

by the poor-laws is, so far as I know, peculiar to England. It consists in the difficulty which a poor man finds in obtaining a settlement, or even in being allowed to exercise his industry in any parish but that to which he belongs. It is the labour of artificers and manufacturers only of which the free circulation is obstructed by *corporation laws*. The difficulty of obtaining *settlements* obstructs even common labour. It may be worth while to give some account of the rise, progress, and present state of this disorder, *the greatest perhaps of any in the police of England.*"

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The most formidable opponent however, was Malthus; when, in his endeavours to disprove the perfectibility of man as it was maintained by Godwin and his school, he established the proposition, that the human race tends to increase faster than the means of subsistence; and when he further persuaded men that this tendency to excess could be counteracted by vice and misery alone. Malthus ridiculed the exertions of well meaning persons, who strove after such social and political organization as would by early marriages prevent vice: and who would offer assistance to those who being burdened with a numerous family, had a difficulty in bringing them up.

"It<sup>(6)</sup> is an evident truth that, whatever be the rate of increase in the means of subsistence, the increase of population must be limited by it, at least after the food has once been divided into the smallest shares that will support life. All children born,



beyond what would be required to keep up the population to this level, must necessarily perish, unless room be made for them by the deaths of grown persons. It has appeared indeed clearly in the course of this work, that in all old states the marriages and births depend principally upon the deaths, and there is no encouragement to early unions so powerful as a great mortality. To act consistently therefore, we should facilitate, instead of foolishly and vainly endeavouring to impede, the operations of nature in producing this mortality; and if we dread the too frequent visitation of the horrid form of famine, we should *sedulously encourage the other forms of destruction*, which we compel nature to use. Instead of recommending cleanliness to the poor, we should encourage contrary habits. In our towns we should make the streets narrower, crowd more people into the houses, and court the return of the plague. In the country, we should build our villages near stagnant pools, and particularly encourage settlements in all marshy and unwholesome situations. But above all, we should reprobate specific remedies for ravaging diseases; and those benevolent, but much mistaken men, who have thought they were doing a service to mankind by projecting schemes for the total extirpation of particular disorders. If by these means the annual mortality were increased from 1 in 36 or 40, to 1 in 18 or 20, we might probably every one of us marry at the age of puberty and yet few be absolutely starved."

To anyone<sup>(7)</sup> holding these views, our poor-laws must have appeared altogether erroneous, and the *Comité de Mendicité* must have seemed correct in



pronouncing our system *la plaie politique de l'Angleterre la plus dévorante*.

"The<sup>(8)</sup> labourer who earns eighteen pence or two shillings a day, and lives at his ease as a single man, will hesitate a little before he divides that pittance among four or five, which seems not to be sufficient for one. Harder fare and harder labour he would perhaps be willing to submit to for the sake of living with the woman he loves; but he must feel conscious, that, should he have a large family and any ill fortune whatever, no degree of frugality, no possible exertion of his manual strength, would preserve him from the heart-rending sensation of seeing his children starve, or of being obliged to the parish for their support. The love of independence is a sentiment that surely none would wish to see eradicated; though the poor-laws of England, it must be confessed, are a system of all others the most calculated gradually to weaken this sentiment, and in the end will probably destroy it completely."

In the second volume however, we find that:—<sup>(9)</sup>

"Fortunately for England, a spirit of independence still remains among the peasantry. The poor-laws are strongly calculated to eradicate this spirit. They have succeeded in part; but had they succeeded as completely as might have been expected, their pernicious tendency would not have been so long concealed.

"Hard as it may appear in individual instances, dependent poverty ought to be held disgraceful. Such a stimulus seems to be absolutely necessary to promote the happiness of the great mass of mankind; and every general attempt to weaken this

stimulus, however benevolent its intention, will always defeat its own purpose. If men be induced to marry from the mere prospect of parish provision, they are not only unjustly tempted to bring unhappiness and dependence upon themselves and children, but they are tempted, without knowing it, to injure all in the same class with themselves."

Malthus quoted in support of his opinions, a passage from Mr. Colquhoun, the<sup>(10)</sup> well known writer on the Police of the Metropolis.

"In spite of all the ingenious arguments which have been used in favour of a system, admitted to be wisely conceived in its origin, the effects it has produced incontestably prove that, with respect to the mass of the poor, there is something radically wrong in the execution. If it were not so, it is impossible that there could exist in the metropolis such an inconceivable portion of human misery, amidst examples of munificence and benevolence unparalleled in any age or country."

But, says Malthus, while "in the effects of the poor-laws I fully agree with Mr. Colquhoun, I cannot agree with him in admitting that the system was well conceived in its origin. I attribute still more evil to the original ill conception, than to the subsequent ill execution."

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In this difference of opinion, Mr. Colquhoun might have appealed to the authority of Jeremy Bentham.<sup>(11)</sup>

"At the time when Bentham devoted his attention to the poor-law, (1797-8) the then existing system had proceeded for some years in that course of de-



generacy from the strict principles of the statute of Elizabeth, which commenced with Gilbert's Act in 1782, and was consummated by East's Act in 1815. Long before he could get others to join in the opinion, he saw that any system founded on the principle of merely relieving suffering, and not containing within itself restrictions calculated to stem the growth of pauperism, would gradually undermine the industrial stamina of the country, by creating more pauperism than it relieved."

Coming down to a later period, we find the benevolent and indefatigable Dr. Chalmers, while far indeed from decrying private charity, denouncing all legal provision : and thus going beyond Colquhoun and Bentham, one of whom attributed the actual mischief to the imperfect execution of the law, the other to the deterioration of the 43rd Elizabeth, by Gilbert's and East's Acts. Chalmers agreed with Malthus that all such laws are in themselves mischievous.<sup>(12)</sup>

"A legal and compulsory provision for the poor stands distinguished from all the former expedients in one important particular. Its object is, not the creation, but the division, of wealth. Its proposal, in so far as it seeks employment for the poor, is not to create additional produce, but to share the existent produce of the land more equally. It opens up no new resources ; neither does it stimulate nor impart greater fertility to the old ones. It proceeds, not in the way of production, but in the way of partition : and, without enlarging the country's stock, would part it differently from before."

"And,<sup>(13)</sup> accordingly, it has been well observed,



that, for all the visible relief effected by a poor's tax, there is as much of real though unseen poverty created among those who have not yet entered within the territory of pauperism, but stand, a countless and untold multitude, around the very margin of it. The distress is not swept off from the face of the community. It is only shifted to another, and generally a far more deserving class of sufferers—to a mass of respectable families on the verge of destitution; struggling against the hard necessity of descending amongst the throng of sturdy applicants for a legalized charity; and all the more hopeless of relief, that the springs of gratuitous benevolence have been well nigh dried up, by the heavy impositions which the artificial or compulsory system has laid on the upper classes of society. It is thus, that, by a sort of festering and spreading operation, the sphere of destitution is constantly widening in every parish, where the benevolence of love has been superseded by the benevolence of law."

"In other<sup>(14)</sup> words, public charity, so far from narrowing the territory of human wretchedness, has widened and extended it; and thus left a greater field than it at first entered on, for the exercise of that private charity, which it has at the same time weakened, both in its means and in its motives. It has deadened, as is patent to all observation, the charity of relatives, the charity of immediate neighbours, the charity of the affluent."

In 1855, M. Le Play published *Les Ouvriers Européens*, a great, accurate, and interesting work, which has not secured in England half the atten-

tion it deserves. M. Le Play visited mining and manufacturing districts from the Oural Mountains to England; sojourned among Mahometans as well as Christians; and stayed long enough in each place to obtain accurate information as to the habits and condition of the workmen.

M. Le Play set about his task with a mind, not merely unprejudiced, but uninfluenced by any school of political economy; and being a patient listener and naturally sagacious, he learnt and appreciated the opinions prevalent among his various hosts. These are his conclusions as to our poor-laws.<sup>(15)</sup>

“There can be no doubt as to the propriety of aiding by positive institutions, persons fallen into destitution, when accidental causes have given an unexpected development to pauperism, or when corruption of morals puts an end to spontaneous assistance on the part of the higher classes of society. Under such circumstances, nothing has been yet invented which can be substituted for the organization established by the parish administrations of Germany and England. But the partisans of this organization do not deny either the vice implied in the principle, or the inconveniences developed in the application. Assistance liberally granted demoralizes the population, which becomes accustomed to resort to alms for means of subsistence which might be obtained by labour: on the other hand, the rigour necessary to prevent this abuse, and which England has found it necessary to push so far as to snap the most sacred ties among necessitous families, is another cause of demoralization to givers as well as to receivers. The main-



tenance of poor-laws is one of the most characteristic symptoms of the continued imperfection of English manners: the abrogation of this regime is one of the principal desires of those generous men, who actuated both by patriotism and by a Christian spirit, are constantly pursuing a reform of their social system."

M. Le Play seems to have fallen into the society of the political economists, who have generally attacked poor-laws, as they have attacked commercial protection. Their motto has been that of Gournay; *laissez-faire, laissez-passer*: leave society to be governed by natural laws.

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The French economists have even surpassed us in this rigour of doctrine.

"Economists<sup>(16)</sup> reject legal charity as producing incomparably more harm than benefit. This has caused their doctrines to be accused of preaching selfishness, of extinguishing sentiments of benevolence, of crushing generosity and devotedness. Happily these accusations are as ill founded as they are odious, and this is easily proved.

"M. de Lamartine has written in *Le conseiller du Peuple*:

"Are fraternity and charity virtues? Yes. Society itself, then, ought to practise these virtues; society ought not, as is maintained by the economists, *whose only religion is arithmetic*, to throw off these great duties and leave to their natural course, misery and death."

"M. Thiers, in his report to the Legislative



Assembly on public assistance, advances the same considerations :

“If an individual can possess virtues, may not society also possess them? The reply, according to us, is not doubtful. We must not regard the State as a being, cold, insensible, heartless. The aggregate of members which constitute the nation, just as it may be intelligent, brave, polished, may also be humane and beneficent, just as the individuals themselves.”

The writer combats at considerable length, these heterodox opinions; and concludes thus :

“Political Economy<sup>(16)</sup> condemns state intervention in the exercise of charity, in the service of education, in that of religious worship, and in the labours of industry: it maintains and proves that in the absence of the unfortunate pretensions of Government to direct these various branches of social activity, we should be more charitable, more religious, better educated, and more industrious.”

The *Dictionnaire* looks upon a poor-law as an offshoot of socialism, which is itself the bugbear of the French nation.<sup>(17)</sup>

“The right to labour, that fundamental principle of the socialist gospel, is not only that liberty which ought to be enjoyed by every one in a free state, of increasing his industry. The right to labour is quite distinct from the freedom of labour. The apostles of this doctrine mean, not every man's employment of his own strength and resources, but a claim conferred on the individual against society. They pretend that every member of a society who has been unable or unwilling to create the means of

subsistence, shall have the right to say to the magistrates who represent and govern it: 'Give me something to do: for you are bound to feed me.' M. de Lamartine, wishing no doubt to get the principle received by mitigating the expression of it, called it the right to existence.

Before this formidable question was passed through the crucible of science, it took its place on the ground of revolutions. It does not really date from 1848, but has only changed its form. It is the extreme consequence of every strict system of public charity; it is the danger from which hardly any Protestant country escaped after the destruction of the monasteries. The Act of the 43rd of Queen Elizabeth sowed the seed in English legislation."

Afterwards, Mr. Mill's doctrine on the subject is contested.<sup>(18)</sup> Mr. Mill had said that experience had shown the possibility of granting relief without producing the expected demoralizing effects; and that liberal assistance might be supplied, provided that there were attached to it conditions restraining liberty and cutting off certain enjoyments. Subject to these limitations it might be regarded as certain that the life of no one need be left to chance; that the community might and must save every individual from utter destitution.

"It must be granted that Mr. Mill's doctrine, the political economy which verges on socialism and sometimes even passes its boundary, is only the theory during many centuries carried into English practice. Since the famous Act which goes back to the 43rd year of Elizabeth's reign, it has been agreed in that country that everyone wanting subsistence

has a right to parish aid. This is the right to existence formally proclaimed by the law; it is the right to wages, a right to which was added as a corrective, in the reform of 1834, a right to work. The poor-rate represents a servitude imposed on property, in virtue of which those who have nothing become a charge on the possessors of means. It confers on all the indigent, on those whom ill fortune has struck down as well as to those who are destitute by their own fault, a title, a claim, a right against society. If society resists, a civil war is inevitable; if the law is executed without reserve, property must sink under it."

Some of our own political economists have taken the same line of argument.

"The clear and direct tendency of the poor-laws," says Ricardo,<sup>(19)</sup> "is in direct opposition to these obvious principles: it is not, as the legislature benevolently intended, to amend the condition of the poor, but to deteriorate the condition of both poor and rich; instead of making the poor rich, they are calculated to make the rich poor; and whilst the present laws are in force, it is quite in the natural order of things that the fund for the maintenance of the poor should progressively increase, till it has absorbed all the net revenue of the country, or at least so much of it as the state shall leave to us, after satisfying its own never-failing demands for the public expenditure."

Mr. Ricardo, to strengthen his case, presented an example of the absurdity into which the contrary opinions formerly ran: he quoted a passage from one of Mr. Pitt's speeches in 1796.<sup>(20)</sup>



"Let us," said Mr. Pitt, "make relief where there are a number of children a matter of right *and honour*, instead of a ground of opprobrium and contempt. This will make a large family a blessing and not a curse; and this will draw a proper line of distinction between those who are able to provide for themselves by their labour, and those who, after having *enriched their country* with a number of children, have a claim upon its assistance for support."

These views of Mr. Pitt seem strange to us: to Ricardo and Malthus they seemed monstrous.

Such is the formidable array of distinguished men whom I have selected from the censors of public relief: Arthur Young, David Hume, Adam Smith, Malthus, Chalmers, Le Play, the writers of the *Dictionnaire*, and Ricardo.

The arguments were reproduced by Colton, who fifty years ago summed up in *Lacon* the opinions on many topics which he found floating on the surface of society. He wrote thus about the Poor-Laws.<sup>(21)</sup>

"Most of their enactments operate as a bounty upon idleness, and as a drawback upon exertion; they take from independence its proper pride, from mendicancy its salutary shame; they deprive foresight of its fair reward, and improvidence of its just responsibility. They act as a constant and *indiscriminating* invitation to the marriage-feast, crowding it with guests, without putting a single dish upon the table: we might even affirm that these laws *now indicate* a quite contrary tendency, and are beginning to *remove* the dishes, although they still

continue to invite the guests; for there are numerous instances where the paralysing presence of the poor-rates has already begun to produce its own *necessary* and final consummation,—*the non-cultivation of the soil!* The code of the Poor-Laws has at length grown up into a tree, which, like the fabulous upas, overshadows and poisons the land: unwholesome expedients *were* the bud, dilemmas and depravities *have been* the blossom, and danger and despair are the bitter fruit: “*radice ad Tartara tendit.*”

No wonder that such a concurrence of opinion should result in proposals to annul our poor-laws.

Ricardo says:—<sup>(22)</sup>

“This pernicious tendency of these laws is no longer a mystery, since it has been fully developed by the able hand of Mr. Malthus; and every friend of the poor must ardently wish for their abolition. Unfortunately, however, they have been so long established, and the habits of the poor have been so formed upon their operation, that to eradicate them with safety from our political system, requires the most cautious and skilful management. It is agreed by all who are most friendly to a repeal of those laws, that if it be desirable to prevent the most overwhelming distress to those for whose benefit they were erroneously enacted, their abolition should be effected by the most gradual steps.”

Some had proposed that a greater centralization should take place: but Ricardo objects to this.<sup>(23)</sup>

“No scheme for the amendment of the poor-laws merits the least attention, which has not their abolition for its ultimate object; and he is the best friend to the poor, and to the cause of humanity,



who can point out how this end can be obtained with the most security, and at the same time with the least violence. It is not by raising, in any manner different from the present, the fund from which the poor are supported, that the evil can be mitigated. It would not only be no improvement, but it would be an aggravation of the distress which we wish to see removed, if the fund were increased in amount, or were levied according to some late proposals, as a general fund from the country at large. The present mode of its collection and application has served to mitigate its pernicious effects. Each parish raises a separate fund for the support of its own poor. Hence it becomes an object of more interest and more practicability to keep the rates low, than if one general fund were raised for the relief of the poor of the whole kingdom. A parish is much more interested in an economical collection of the rate, and a sparing distribution of relief, when the whole saving will be for its own benefit, than if hundreds of other parishes were to partake of it.

It is to this cause, that we must ascribe the fact of the poor-laws not having yet absorbed all the net revenue of the country; it is to the rigour with which they are applied, that we are indebted for their not having become overwhelmingly oppressive."

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A more distinct proposition had been made forty years earlier by Mr. Gilbert, and had met with Arthur Young's unhesitating approbation. An article noticing a pamphlet of Mr. Gilbert's, begins thus.<sup>(24)</sup>



“The most important part of Mr. Gilbert’s scheme, and the most satisfactory passage in this work is the following:—‘So much has been already said on the grievance of the present rates, that some effectual provision ought to be made in the intended reform to correct it. It is meant that an annual rate shall be settled for each parish, at the medium of the years 1783, 1784, 1785. This is never to be exceeded, so that the growth of this evil will be stopped at once.’

“Should the bills be lost in parliament, it is much to be hoped that Mr. Gilbert will bring in a bill the same day, to give efficacy to this simple proposition unconnected with every other. Let what will be the system, this ought to be made law, without any delay in waiting for complex arrangements.”

Malthus afterwards proposed a very different scheme.<sup>(25)</sup>

“As a previous step even to any considerable alteration in the present system, which would contract or stop the increase of the relief to be given, it appears to me that we are bound in justice and honour formally to disclaim the *right* of the poor to support.

“To this end, I should propose a regulation to be made, declaring, that no child born from any marriage, taking place after the expiration of a year from the date of the law, and no illegitimate child born two years from the same date, should ever be entitled to parish assistance. And to give a more general knowledge of this law, and to enforce it more strongly on the minds of the lower classes of people, the clegyman of each parish should, after the publication of banns, read a short address, stating

the strong obligation of every man to support his own children; the impropriety, and even immorality, of marrying without a prospect of being able to do this; the evils which had resulted to the poor themselves from the attempt which had been made to assist by public institutions in a duty which ought to be exclusively appropriated to parents; and the absolute necessity which had at length appeared of abandoning all such institutions, on account of their producing effects totally opposite to those which were intended."

In another place, Malthus says:—<sup>(26)</sup>

"What I have really proposed is a very different measure.

It is the *gradual* and *very gradual* abolition of the poor-laws. (So gradual as not to affect any individuals at present alive, or who will be born within the next two years.) And the reason why I have ventured to suggest a proposition of this kind for consideration is my firm conviction, that they have lowered very decidedly the wages of the labouring classes, and made their general condition essentially worse than it would have been if these laws had never existed."

It must not be supposed however, that the censors had it all their own way. There were always men whose minds, not strengthened (or shall I say hardened?) by abstract doctrine, felt the necessity for systematic relief of constantly recurring destitution. Living among the poor, they could form a just estimate of fancy pictures of the luxury of paupers.<sup>(27)</sup>



“Theirs is yon house that holds the parish poor,  
Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door ;  
There, where the putrid vapours flagging play,  
And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day ;  
There children dwell, who know no parents’ care ;  
Parents, who know no children’s love dwell there ;  
Heart-broken matrons on their joyless bed,  
Forsaken wives, and mothers never wed ;  
Dejected widows, with unheeded tears,  
And crippled age with more than childhood fears ;  
The lame, the blind, and (far the happiest they ! )  
The moping idiot, and the madman gay.”

Malthus himself at times almost hesitated about his own conclusions. His fundamental objection to legal relief, was its tendency to cause improvident marriages. Yet he had to confess that “the scanty relief granted to persons in distress, the capricious and insulting manner in which it is sometimes distributed by the overseers, and the natural and becoming pride, not yet quite extinct among the peasantry of England, have deterred the more thinking and virtuous part of them from venturing on marriage, without some better prospect of maintaining their families than mere parish assistance.”

But not only were the overseers officious and insolent ; the surgeon and even the clergyman were too often negligent or worse.

“Anon<sup>(29)</sup> a figure enters, quaintly neat,  
All pride and business, bustle and conceit ;  
With looks unalter’d by these scenes of woe,  
With speed that, entering, speaks his haste to go ;



He bids the gazing throng around him fly,  
And carries fate and physic in his eye;  
A potent quack, long vers'd in human ills,  
Who first insults the victim that he kills;  
Whose murd'rous hand a drowsy Bench protect,  
And whose most tender mercy is,—neglect.

Paid by the parish for attendance here,  
He wears contempt upon his sapient sneer;  
In haste he seeks the bed where misery lies,  
Impatience mark'd in his inverted eyes;  
And some habitual queries hurry'd o'er,  
Without reply, he rushes on the door."

Crabbe is little more complimentary to his brother clergyman.

"Fain would he ask the parish priest to prove  
His title certain to the joys above;  
For this he sends the murmuring nurse, who calls  
The holy stranger to these dismal walls:  
And doth not he, the pious man, appear,  
He, 'passing rich with forty pounds a year' ?  
Ah ! no, a shepherd of a different stock,  
And far unlike him, feeds this little flock;  
A jovial youth, who thinks his Sunday's task  
As much as God or man can fairly ask;  
The rest he gives to loves and labours light,  
To fields the morning, and to feasts the night.  
None better skilled the noisy pack to guide,  
To urge their chase, to cheer them or to chide;  
A sportsman keen, he shoots through half the day,  
And skill'd at whist, devotes the night to play;  
Then, while such honours bloom around his head,  
Shall he sit sadly by the sick man's bed,

To raise the hope he feels not, or with zeal  
To combat fears that e'en the pious feel?"

Such a prospect of sickness and old age does not seem encouraging; and we cannot feel surprised to find Malthus admitting that after all,<sup>(30)</sup> "the small proportion of annual marriages before-mentioned, indicates that habits of prudence, extremely favourable to happiness, prevail through a large part of the community, in spite of the poor-laws:" and again,<sup>(31)</sup> that "besides that spirit of independence and prudence, which checks the frequency of marriage, notwithstanding the encouragements of the poor-laws, these laws themselves occasion a check of no inconsiderable magnitude, and thus counteract with one hand what they encourage with the other. As each parish is obliged to maintain its own poor, it is naturally fearful of increasing their numbers; and every landholder is in consequence more inclined to pull down than to build cottages, except when the demand for labourers is really urgent. This deficiency of cottages operates necessarily as a strong check to marriage; and this check is probably the principal reason why we have been able to continue the system of the poor-laws so long."

Then he grants that the state of the poor in England with poor-laws, is better than that of other countries without such laws; and he concedes also that there exists in England a very large class which through desire of bettering its condition, exercises great industry and foresight. He objects however, that:<sup>(32)</sup>

"These dispositions, contrary to the hopeless in-



dolence remarked in despotic countries, are generated by the constitution of the English government, and the excellence of its laws, which secure to every individual the produce of his industry. . . . The poor-laws have constantly tended to counteract the natural and acquired advantages of this country."

As Mr. Malthus grew older, his convictions on this subject were weakened: in an Appendix to his work, he writes thus:<sup>(33)</sup>

"The obvious *tendency* of the poor-laws is certainly to encourage marriage; but a closer attention to all their indirect as well as direct effects may make it a matter of *doubt* to what extent they *really* do this. They clearly tend, in their general operation, to discourage sobriety and economy, to encourage idleness and the desertion of children, and to put virtue and vice more on a level than they otherwise would be; but I would not presume to say positively that these greatly encourage population."

Malthus feared that such an admission might be thoughtlessly interpreted as an acknowledgment of error in his general doctrine as to population; he protests against this:<sup>(34)</sup>

"The most favourable light in which the poor-laws can possibly be placed, is to say that under all the circumstances, with which they have been accompanied, they do not much encourage marriage; and undoubtedly the returns of the Population Act seem to warrant the assertion. Should this be true, some of the objections which have been urged in the Essay against the poor-laws will be removed; but I wish to press on the attention of the reader, that they will in that case be removed in strict conformity to the



general principles of the work, and in a manner to confirm, not to invalidate, the main positions which it has attempted to establish."

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We have seen how Arthur Young condemned the practice of parish relief, as demoralizing and grossly absurd. A few years later,<sup>(35)</sup> he admitted into his *Annals*, without a word of condemnation or even remonstrance, an account of the "Institutions at Hamburg, for the Employment and Support of the Poor, since the year 1788:" an organization which ten years before he would have pronounced as foolish as pouring water into a bottomless tub.

The anonymous writer<sup>(36)</sup> of the article, had resided sixteen months in England, and having heard frequent complaints of the poor-laws, proposed to give an account of the Hamburg measures for "suppressing beggary, encouraging industry, restoring health, and promoting morality, among a numerous class of poor."

The experiment had been tried for six years, and seems to have been much wanted, since in a population of 110,000, there were 7,000 paupers and 2,500 persons in the hospitals, or between 8 and 9 per cent. of the whole; whereas in England at present, the paupers are under 5 per cent. The evil of leaving things alone had become intolerable, and it was at length resolved to set about the correction of it. The citizens generally subscribed with liberality, and two hundred of the most respectable of them devoted themselves to the work for seven years, until beggary was nearly rooted out.

Voluntary efforts had been made before: one

society had undertaken to relieve the indigent sick: another had purchased flax and spinning-wheels for those willing to work: certain revenues had been administered by churchwardens. All these isolated efforts had failed, and it was determined to bring them under one administration, supported by such monies as could be privately obtained by a weekly collection from house to house.

A careful organization was agreed on: the city was divided into sixty districts, each of which was presided over by some of the most respectable and wealthy inhabitants. "Actual relief was the first object; for we were all convinced of the barbarity of preventing beggary, when provision for real want is not previously prepared; but at the very moment that this provision was secured, measures were taken to prevent any man from receiving a shilling which he could have been able to earn for himself."

Measures were taken for ascertaining the gains of each family that asked for help: a set of questions was agreed on; but only a few answers were exactly true, and all the tricks were employed which habits of begging had made familiar. As to the assistance rendered, it was a fixed principle to reduce it lower than what any industrious man or woman could earn.

Still it was found that very little way was made, because the recipients who were idly disposed, might choose to live on the pittance given rather than labour for a higher remuneration. It was therefore resolved to set the paupers to work at spinning flax, and this was the easier because six-sevenths of them were women and children. "From that moment,



applications became less frequent; and we had an infallible standard for distinguishing real want."

"But want of employment for poor in tolerable health, is but one source of misery: old age, and incurable diseases, sickness, and the *difficulty of supporting a numerous family*, were evils which also called for assistance. For sickness a hospital was provided. For neglected children under six years of age, *boarding out* was adopted: and many a good motherly woman we found, who became an excellent nurse." Education was not neglected: it was given by industrial schools, in which the children worked two-thirds of their time, and in the other third were instructed in "reading, writing, casting accounts, religion, and church music."

The annual expenses were considerable, amounting to £11,000 or £12,000 a year: which, allowing for the subsequent rise in the cost of living, would be as much as if England and Wales now spent at least four millions; an amount very far less than what we spend on our paupers; as might be expected with the Hamburg new and gratuitous management.

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It is worth while to compare with this, a much more recent German effort in the same direction; known to us by an inquiry lately made under the instructions of Mr. Stansfeld as head of the Local Government Board, which since August, 1871, has superseded the Poor-Law Board.

One of the Poor-Law Inspectors, Mr. Andrew Doyle, was dispatched to make the inquiry; and received the spontaneous help of Mr. Rathbone, M.P.



for Liverpool, at whose instance he was sent. The subject of investigation was the system begun at Elberfeld, and adopted at other places.

Till the year 1850, legal relief was given by the *Bureaux de bienfaisance*, established in the Rhenish provinces under the Empire. But in that year Elberfeld took advantage of a Royal Prussian Decree of nearly thirty years before (21 May, 1823) and began a radical reform. It was high time to make a change; for out of a population of fifty thousand, four thousand were receiving relief; a proportion not far from twice that of England and Wales. The cost indeed, does not seem very great to us, who are accustomed to a high scale of wages and expenditure: £7,000 a year.

The results of the change of system were very striking.

Number of paupers before the change,

4,000: cost £7,072.

„ „ „ after „ 1,528: „ £2,623.

As we see only one side of the shield, we do not know what amount of suffering, destitution, despair, and death, may have followed so sudden and violent a reduction.

Before the present organization was hit on, several experiments had been tried: in 1850, the town was divided into sixty districts, and a visitor was appointed to each: this was found insufficient, and the attempt failed. Again, the religious bodies were invited to manage, each of them, its own paupers: as the expenses were to be paid out of a common fund, nothing but jealousies and bickerings could be expected: in fact, the Lutherans alone undertook

the charge, and at the end of a few years it was taken from them.

At last, a leading banker, Daniel Von der Heydt, intervened successfully. His scheme was adopted in 1852, and was revised in 1861. The administration consists of a President and nine citizens, elected for three years. Under these there are 252 Visitors, all of them unpaid. Two hundred and fifty-two visitors! In one of our great towns containing half a million inhabitants, we should want in the same proportion no less than 2,500 Visitors. We may form some idea of what this means. Most places of worship among us, have some organization for distributing charity. Suppose the great town of half a million had a hundred churches and chapels provided with a district visiting society, and twenty-five visitors to each: that would provide the necessary number. But unfortunately, these visitors would be found to have more zeal than discretion; and still more unfortunately, the districts where pauperism prevails are just those in which there are few or no residents of education and affluence. The time may come when the richer inhabitants of great towns will take these matters into their own hands. Probably, if it is done at all, it will be by bringing into the ranks the ladies who have time to spare: for it must be observed that at present most of the district-visitors set to work by the churches, are women; few men having leisure or inclination. It will be long I fear, before Liverpool will furnish 2,500 gentlemen, or Birmingham 1,700 for this good work. If indeed we should get rid of our sabbatical superstition, and apply part of Sunday to this charitable occupation,



like the overseers of Queen Elizabeth's days, that might give us some hope.

Some efforts however, are actually being made, to imitate this German organization. This is the case in St. George's, Hanover-square, where there is a Union. Many parishes of which it is constituted, have established voluntary local boards, each of which provides itself with a list of all parishioners receiving relief, and considers what can be done to better their condition. There is little difficulty in the wealthy West-end quarters, which already possess abundant district-visitors: but the poorer Westminster parishes, having few residents of the upper or middle classes, are not so easily provided with visitors or funds. The whole scheme is still experimental, though the sub-committee of St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, has gone so far as to publish a Report upon their paupers.

At Macclesfield again, an attempt is being made to try the Elberfeld system. Mr. Stansfeld, as President of the Local Government Board, has sanctioned the proceeding. It is proposed to appoint 100 volunteer assistant guardians, each of whom shall have the supervision of only four cases. The volunteers for each ward are to meet together and compare notes, and then report on every case to the Guardians. Time alone will show how far it is possible for these volunteers to act in subordination to the legal guardians, and to play the subordinate part of relieving officers. I suspect that in the end, if the organization is to be continued, it will be to women that the visiting will be entrusted.

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To return to Arthur Young: in publishing the article on Hamburg without comment or protest, he showed that his destructive zeal had slackened. But he had another correspondent, Mr. T. Ruggles, a well known student of what we call social science, who stoutly maintained the utility of our poor-laws when fitly administered.<sup>(37)</sup>

“The same wretched principle, appears to have pervaded the execution of the poor-laws, towards the end of the last century; and similar complaints of the increasing burthen of expense prevail; as may be seen in a pamphlet, named, *Bread for the Poor*, printed at Exeter in 1698, by Samuel Darker, signed by the initials of the author’s name, S. D.; he says, in a kind of introduction, that ‘whoever takes the small trouble of inspecting the poor accounts of a few parishes, may soon observe, that the charge of maintaining them, in some places is, within sixty years past, advanced from 40s. to £40 yearly; in others, twice that sum; and mostwheres double,—within twenty years past, and like to double again in a short time; and notwithstanding such advance in maintaining the poor, yet the wages they receive is greater than formerly, work more plentiful, and provisions cheaper.’”

But, says Mr. Ruggles:—

“Why do we throw the blame from where it ought to fall, and charge the laws themselves with the consequences flowing from a breach of them? They form, in general, *a code replete with humanity* in their principle, *wise* in their regulations, which uniformly tend to discourage idleness, and unnecessary expense, throughout the whole scope of their

legislation; and are now charged with all those destructive evils they were intended, and are calculated, to prevent: the burthen of the poor's rate is heavy and daily increasing, by a rapid accumulation; and the cause does not lie in a defect of the *laws* for the maintenance of the poor, but in a defect of the *execution* of those laws: we are affected with a similar impression as those weak minds which, while the body is hastening to the grave, in a deep decline, have not energy enough to redeem returning health, by a course of exercise, and virtuous temperance; but lazily suffer the vital principle to be extinguished, by continuing in a habit of indolence and debauchery: in short, we are infected by the *very vices*, which we so loudly cry out against, in those who are supported at our expense."

This was written in 1790-1: the rates went on increasing, and the difficulties of administration became greater every year. In 1798, Arthur Young was addressed by Jeremy Bentham, then obscure as compared with what he became twenty years afterwards. Bentham's mind was full of the "Panopticon or Central-Inspection Principle," which he had picked up in Russia when visiting his brother: <sup>(27A)</sup> a principle which he afterwards developed more fully for application to prisons. Far <sup>(28)</sup> from desiring to abolish the practice of legal relief, he wished to adopt such a system as would make that relief effectual, while avoiding the evils which often arise.

"Subsistence being, as already stated, one of the main objects of the law, according to his division, he thought it the duty of the legislature to provide a system which should obviate, as far as human

foresight could, the chance of any human being suffering from starvation. In accomplishing this, however, it was necessary to keep in view the counter error of giving a boon to indolence, by allowing the idle pauper to consume the wealth of the industrious and enterprising producer."

"As Bentham happily says,<sup>(39)</sup> 'the treasure of the comparatively rich is an insurance office to the comparatively indigent;' but care must be taken that the insurer be not bound to pay till the calamity he insures against has occurred."

Bentham had few warmer supporters than Francis Place, a man whose opinion on poor-laws had a peculiar value, because he had lived familiarly among those most interested in them.<sup>(40)</sup>

"A hired workman myself for several years, enjoying the confidence of large bodies of workmen, an active promoter and conductor of trade-societies during those years, and an encourager of them to the present hour, I have had opportunities of *seeing* and *feeling*, and knowing most intimately, the characters and habits, the virtues and vices, the pleasures and pains, the joys and sorrows of large masses of the population, and may still claim a sympathy with them, which I feel will never be eradicated."

Now this is what Mr. Place says, in his volume intended to illustrate and support Malthus's theory of population.

"The<sup>(41)</sup> denial of the *right* of the poor man to the means of existence, when by his labour he cannot purchase food, is, notwithstanding its absurdity, purely mischievous; its obvious tendency is to encourage and increase the hard-heartedness of the



rich towards the poor, and to lay Mr. Malthus himself under the same imputation. It is one of the passages in his book, which has mainly impeded the progress of information respecting the principle of population, among the people.

“Mr. Malthus<sup>(42)</sup> proceeds in an unsatisfactory, inconclusive manner, to condemn the man who, after notice given, *may choose to marry without the prospect of being able to support a family*. Mr. Godwin, in reply to this, has successfully shown that no labourer, and very few artisans, have a prospect of being able to maintain a family; and that, consequently, on Mr. Malthus’s hypothesis, scarcely any of them can marry without committing an immoral act. This seems never to have occurred to Mr. Malthus; he appears to have looked only to the consequences of an improvident marriage, in those who might happen to be thrust out, and become at some period of their lives unable to provide food for their children.”

I do not stop to inquire whether there is not some ambiguity in the phrase “without a prospect of being able to support a family:” I cite Mr. Place’s words to show that a man of peculiar experience as to the needs of the workman, who also was an avowed disciple of Malthus, could protest strongly against his master’s condemnation of poor-laws.

I have already proved that Malthus found his convictions weakened as he grew older: that he really learnt to doubt whether he had been right in ascribing to the poor-laws an increase in the number of marriages. As regards very large towns he latterly conceived a suspicion that, notwithstanding

all objections, such laws were inevitable. In his last edition he had this note.<sup>(43)</sup>

“In so large a town as London, which must necessarily encourage a prodigious influx of strangers from the country, there must be always a great many persons out of work; and it is probable, that some public institution for the relief of the casual poor, upon a plan similar to that proposed by Mr. Colquhoun (c. xiii. p. 371) would, under very judicious management, produce more good than evil. But for this purpose it would be absolutely necessary that, if work were provided by the institution, the sum that a man could earn by it should be less than the worst paid common labour; otherwise the claimants would rapidly increase.”

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I have already quoted one passage from M. Le Play's great work, *Les Ouvriers Européens*: here is another.<sup>(44)</sup>

“The institution of poor-rates has been sharply attacked by most continental writers; but I do not find that any one of them has pointed out other means of remedying the extreme consequences of the fundamental principles of the English system, freedom of labour, and reciprocal independence of employer and workman. No one has as yet proved that in countries where the same system is developing itself more and more, private charity is able to neutralize the results of industrial crises among populations which, when their wages cease, lose their means of existence. Neither has it been proved



that the principle of assistance as it is practised on the Continent, is less injurious than that of the English tax, as regards sentiments of dignity and morality among workmen.

“Even in England however, this institution is generally regarded as an unhappy necessity; and the results obtained after so many efforts, are far from contenting the Christian or the statesman. The amount of the tax, which at the beginning of the eighteenth century did not exceed a million sterling, which in 1776 amounted to a million and three-quarters, reached in 1847, the cipher of five millions and a quarter. It is notorious however, that notwithstanding this addition to the public burden, the most interesting portion of the labouring population receives no assistance: the family described in this monograph (that of a London working cutler) has many times been denied relief, when through want of employment it has fallen into utter destitution.”

Among the continental writers who have condemned our system, must be placed Louis Blanc; in spite of the assertion of the *Dictionnaire*, already quoted, that that system must be regarded as socialistic.

“Why,” says Louis Blanc,<sup>(45)</sup> “should we adopt the doctrines of Malthus? But no, Malthus was deficient in logic: he did not push his system to its consequences. Shall we range ourselves on the side of the *Book of Murder*, published in England in February 1839, or of that publication of Marcus, of which our friend Godfrey Cavaignac gave an account, and in which it is proposed to suffocate all the infants of the working classes except one-third, on condition



of rewarding the mothers for this act of patriotism? You laugh? Yet the book was written seriously by a philosophical publicist; it was commented on and discussed by the greatest English writers; it was finally dismissed with indignation as an atrocious thing, and one far from laughable. The fact is that she had no right to laugh at these sanguinary follies; that England who has found herself driven by the principle of competition to *the poor-laws, another colossal extravagance.*"

It was Louis Blanc's business in this book on the organization of labour, to decry competition; and he would not see anything good in English life, because unfettered competition is the soul of it. But for this prejudice he would have been led to a high appreciation of our poor-laws, as a mitigation of the evils he eloquently describes.<sup>(46)</sup>

"He is free then, to develop his intelligence, this child of the poor man, who turned by hunger from the road to school, runs to sell himself body and soul to the nearest spinning mill, that he may add a few halfpence to his father's wages!

"He is free to discuss the conditions of his labour, this artisan who dies if the discussion is prolonged!

"He is free to shelter his existence from the chances of a murderous lottery, the workman who, in the confusion of so many individual efforts, finds himself reduced to depend, not on his own foresight and prudence, but on each of those disorders, the natural progeny of competition: on a distant bankruptcy, on a cessation of demand, on a machine invented, on a factory closed, on an industrial panic, on a cessation of work!

"He is free now to sleep in the street, the journeyman without work, who has no refuge!"

If M. Louis Blanc had not been blinded by his hatred of competition, he would have had more to say of English poor-laws than that they were a colossal extravagance. He would rather have declared, with the Registrar-General, in 1858, as quoted in the *Statistical Journal*,<sup>(47)</sup> that:—

"England under her system of Poor-Laws, bestows on one in 22 of her population, taking one day with another, relief to the extent of about 4d. a day, making in the aggregate about £6,000,000 a year. This is perhaps not more than 2 per cent. on the income of all classes." (The writer should have said one or two per cent.: so that if the tax were equally distributed, the receiver of an annual income of £100 would pay for poor-rates £1 or £2; the receiver of £1000 would pay £10 or £20.)

"Some foreign writers occasionally speak of England as a country 'eaten up' by pauperism; they do not seem to be aware of the fact that in other countries—as in Ireland formerly,—the absence of a legally ordained system of relief implies aggravation and not absence of distress. It would be equally correct to look upon England as a country of wealthy ratepayers, overflowing with Christian charity."

Even the pure Political Economists will perhaps at last come round so far as to agree with Mr. Dunning Macleod, one of the ablest and latest of them.<sup>(48)</sup>

"We have it from the highest authority that the poor will never cease from off the earth, and, in truth, in all densely peopled countries, the question of the poor is one of vital importance. No institu-



tions, however ancient or excellent in theory, no property can be secure in a country where there is a great, fierce mass of starving populace. There is no surer cause of revolution than physical misery. The question of the poor has been of transcendent importance in England, ever since the days of Henry VIII., and although the evils of the old Poor-Law became at last intolerable, and unquestionably greatly aggravated the very evil they were intended to relieve, there can scarcely be any doubt that it contributed greatly to remove one chief cause of political turmoil. It was certainly a heavy price to pay, but it is not easy to see how the country could have escaped a revolution, if a large mass of starving pauperism had been added to all the other inflammatory elements during the fever of the Revolutionary war. That all laws of this nature strictly belong to Socialism, and are, therefore, violations of Political Economy, is true, but in this case it is a choice of evils, and some sort of a law of this kind seems to be absolutely essential for the peace of society. The question then seems to be, to devise the least obnoxious form of a necessary evil."

## IV.

AN unprejudiced student, after reading this history of opinions, given as far as possible in the writers' own words, would ask for further information. He could not disregard the unmeasured condemnation of poor-laws by David Hume, Arthur Young, Malthus, Chalmers, Ricardo, and recent French authorities: nor could he fail to see on the



other hand, that Malthus, their great enemy, had afterwards gone far towards recanting his opinions ; while the testimonies of Bentham, Place, Ruggles, Mill, Le Play, and Macleod, appeared strong in favour of legal relief.

To decide the controversy, shall we appeal to facts ? Let us ask what have been the results : let us compare England, the land of poor-laws, with other countries in which the distressed have been left to themselves and to private charity.

Instead however, of going abroad, where as far as I know we have, except as to France lately, but little precise information, we may advantageously study the cases of Scotland and of Ireland. In Scotland there was for centuries some legal provision made, but Ireland until about thirty years ago was absolutely devoid of it. There exist ample accounts of the condition of both these countries under this comparative or total neglect ; and a summary will be found in the volumes of Sir George Nicholls.<sup>(49)</sup>

Under the old system in Scotland, the relief fund was principally derived from church collections, which were universally made, though the amounts were frequently small. "Throughout the northern and western Highlands, and nearly the whole of the parishes in the synods of Shetland, Orkney, Sutherland, and Caithness, Ross, Glenelg, Argyll and Moray—comprising in extent almost one-half of Scotland, the church collections, with such small sums as may accrue to the kirk session from fees, fines, &c., aided in a few instances by occasional donations from heritors or casual visitors, form the only public fund to which the poor can look for

relief." In other parts there was some additional income from *mortifications*, (a settlement in mortmain)<sup>(49A)</sup> or from accumulated donations and savings.

When this income was insufficient, there existed a power of levying a rate; but the Scotch had a strong objection to a legal assessment, and the clergy used their influence against it. To avoid the necessity for it, the heritors agreed to a "voluntary assessment," generally, but by no means always, in proportion to their rentals. In towns however, a compulsory rate was of late years commonly levied.

Scotland therefore, had a poor-law, and one capable of indefinite extension. But according to a Report of 1839,<sup>(50)</sup> the relief given was "in all cases remarkably moderate." It is stated "that except in very rare instances of total and absolute destitution, the aliment to be provided by the parish was not such as would render the pauper independent of other resources—that in general poor persons were not so entirely destitute as not to be capable of procuring a part of their sustenance by their own labour, or by the assistance of relatives, or the benevolence of neighbours or others." The allusion to the benevolence of others besides neighbours, seems to imply that begging was regarded as a legitimate source of income.

These remarks however, are applicable only to able-bodied persons: and it must be clearly understood that the Scotch pertinaciously denied such persons any *right* whatever to assistance. The destitute were divided into *ordinary* and *occasional*: that is permanent and casual: the former had a right to relief; the latter had no such right.<sup>(51)</sup> "The general tenor of our Scottish statutes applies solely to those



who are permanently disabled; and although in many parishes it was the practice to afford relief to persons labouring under temporary sickness, there seems to be no authority for considering that this was imperative on them."

The Scotch congregations and landowners then, did lay down the rule of giving to the permanently disabled; and were accustomed to occasionally eke out the earnings of destitute able-bodied persons. Let us look more clearly at particular times.

In 1783<sup>(52)</sup> there was great distress, and especially in the Highlands. A witness stated to a Committee of the House of Commons, "that the season was very cold, and the harvest late—that the frost came on at the beginning of November very severe, and a great deal of snow fell at the beginning of the month—that at that time the corn in general was far from ripe, and only a small proportion of it was cut before the snow fell, and that the crop was very deficient." Another witness stated—"that during the early frost and fall of snow in November and December last, the crop of potatoes was entirely destroyed in most parts of the counties of Nairn, Inverness, and Murray—that the oats and barley were covered with snow before they were ripe—that the cattle in many parts were kept alive by pulling the green corn from under the snow, and that the frost kept the corn from filling so as to yield meal—that this is the second bad season, and the farmers had sold great part of their stock to pay their rent."

If such terrible seasons had fallen on Englishmen or Welshmen, we know that there would have been a great rush to the relieving officers: the poor-rate



would have risen alarmingly; and there would have probably been a demand for rates-in-aid and for Government assistance. But we are told that Englishmen and Welshmen have been corrupted by centuries of dependence on poor-rates, and that if they had been taught to take care of themselves, they would have laid up a provision for bad seasons. Let us see whether the Highlanders under this very training had laid up a provision.

The sheriff of the counties of Caithness and Sutherland wrote,<sup>(53)</sup> stating that "the condition of the north parts of Scotland is truly lamentable. In Sutherland and Ross shires many people have already perished for want of food—Caithness is not far removed from a similar disaster, and in Orkney they are still nigher to it." Another writer from Inverness says, "I cannot express to you the miserable situation of this country. There are many good farmers with their wives and children begging in the streets. Last harvest has finished the most of them. Meal or any kind of victuals cannot be had for love or money, and before the summer is over people will die in the fields for want."

A country corrupted by the practice of relieving the able-bodied poor, could not have been more distressed; it might have been much less so.

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I will now take a case of general distress from another cause. In 1819<sup>(54)</sup> there were great misery and discontent throughout Great Britain: in Scotland as in England there was a dearth of employment in the towns, and Paisley in particular had crowds of

destitute people. These unfortunates applied to the authorities for relief; but this was refused them, on the ground that "they did not fall within the class of poor for which the law provided." The sheriff however, "adjudged the heritors and kirk session to meet and assess themselves for the relief of these persons." An appeal was made to the supreme court, and it was decided that the sheriff's interference was illegal. It turned out therefore, that though there existed a power to levy a rate, it was at the good pleasure of heritors and kirk session to grant or refuse such a rate. There was "no recognition of a right to relief, neither was there any power to enforce its being administered. The sufferers were restricted from begging whilst they were without the means of living."

Sir George Nicholls remarks upon this:—"It may perhaps be said that stagnation of trade is not an uncommon occurrence, and that it ought to be provided against by the exercise of forethought and provident habits on the part of the working classes."

The question however, which is before us in this section, is not what ought to be, but what is: does habitual refusal of legal relief to able-bodied persons, cause such foresight as to provide beforehand against cessation of employment?

Legal relief was refused in 1819 and subsequently, and the denial was sanctioned by the supreme court: let us look at the same population twenty years later after the further training under this severe discipline. In 1840, 1841, 1842, Paisley again suffered dire distress; and the long continuance of it, still unrelieved by legal relief to the able-bodied, led to the



raising of large voluntary contributions in other parts of Scotland and in England. The government even sent a confidential agent, Mr. Twisleton, to assist in administering the funds, and to report on the case.

The training of the Paisley artisans had been perfect: they had been famished not only in 1819, but again in 1826-7, again in 1837: yet in 1840 to 1842, they exhibited as much helplessness as if they had been corrupted by an English poor-law. Such corruption they had not suffered; for so strong was still the objection to a legal assessment, that though the Paisley people had agreed at a public meeting to submit to a voluntary rate in the proportion of 15 per cent. on their parochial assessment, only 473 persons paid anything, and these on an average less than 25s. each. This, together with the private subscriptions raised in Paisley, amounted to £1,227, for the help of ten to twelve thousand destitute!

Now let us look at the condition of these men trained in the bracing school of adversity and severe legal parsimony. The visitors made such reports as these.<sup>(55)</sup>

“In many of the houses there is no furniture of any kind, except perhaps merely a box to sit upon—a *great number* of them have no regular bed or bedding, merely straw to lie upon on the bare ground.” . . . “I have visited 326 cases of females—In some of the houses there is no furniture at all—There is merely a small stool or a box to sit upon, and in two or three instances merely a large stone—The *widows with families* seemed the class worst off.” . . . “I have visited about 500 cases



of men and women—The people are wretchedly poor—I have been in houses where there is not a single article, not a bed nor blanket—*They are very wretched*—The cases of the weavers are the worst; but the misery is very general.”

“The people are described in the Report as depressed in manner, and speaking despondingly of the future, and with the *spirit of independence seemingly quite broken down*. . . . The Report states it to be universally admitted and deplored that the character of the weavers, particularly that of the rising generation, is much deteriorated, and this is said to be a consequence of the depressing circumstances in which they have for a long period been placed. . . . Under the influence of long-continued privations, ‘men lose self-respect, and become desponding and reckless. But this mood of mind is likely to prolong those privations, and is ill suited for steady industry, thrift, and foresight.’ ”

This wretched condition, bodily and mental, was the more lamentable, because it was a fall from that of a golden age. “From the middle till the close of last century (1750-1800) Paisley was unrivalled among Scottish towns in taste, in thoughtfulness, and in the consistent observances of Christian life. Beautifully-trimmed gardens, spreading closely over the healthful space which then lay behind almost every street, had long been the uncovered evening homes of the working population, in which was sustained a graceful rivalry in the culture of plants and flowers. . . . Rowland Hill delighted to describe it as the Paradise of Scotland.” <sup>(55A)</sup>

Such were the people afterwards spoken of as

having lost their self-respect and as becoming desponding and reckless. Could any relaxation of manners alleged to be caused by liberal aid, reasonably distributed, be so bad as what is brought before us in this gloomy picture? Where are the thrift, the foresight, the resolute struggle, the proud independence, promised us as results of stern denial of legal relief?

These three years of trial (1840, 1841, 1842) brought into prominence the questions, whether Scotland should go on with its scanty relief, confined to disabled paupers, or whether there should be substituted a system more like that of England. A Commission of Inquiry was appointed in 1843, and in the next year made a report.

The Commissioners stated<sup>(56)</sup> that the uniform practice was to limit the legal assistance to persons described in the Act of 1503, as "cruiked folk, blind folk, sick folk, impotent folk, and weak folk," or described in the Act of 1759, as "aged, pure, impotent and decayed persons."

They found that begging was legalized. In the parish of Cambleton,<sup>(57)</sup> "forty-nine persons were in October 1842, struck off the roll by a committee of managers of the poor, and badges were given to such of the number as chose to receive them as a license to beg:" and the commissioners found that without such badges, "in most of the burghs and smaller towns the paupers were allowed to beg on one or more days in the week, as in Inverary, Dingwall, Thurso, Perth, Kirkcaldy, and many others." We are reminded of our old friend Edie Ochiltree, the king's bedesman, who so ruthlessly disturbed



the oration of Monkbarns upon the Kaim of Kinprunes and the ancient Roman Prætorium.<sup>(57A)</sup>

The commissioners reported that though many of the paupers actually admitted to the roll, were fairly provided for with the help of the small gains they could add to the legal allowance, yet that<sup>(58)</sup> "the allowances were often inadequate, both in town and country parishes, and that the amount of relief given was frequently altogether insufficient to provide even the commonest necessities of life." In the Highlands and Western Islands, when the poor had exhausted their small crop of potatoes, they were forced "to cast themselves on the charity of their neighbours, many of whom were nearly as poor as themselves. In other districts they might get assistance from the more wealthy classes, and in towns they had recourse to common begging."

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Here then were two provinces of a kingdom: the one, England, provided for centuries with a Poor Law under which legal relief was given to the destitute; not only to cruiked folk, blind folk, sick folk, impotent folk, and weak folk, but to the able-bodied also: the other province denying the able-bodied any right to assistance. In England there were improvidence and beggary: in Scotland also there were improvidence and beggary. In Scotland, both in town and country, the able-bodied destitute were left to die: in England they were carefully relieved. In assimilating the provinces to each other, which should prevail? should the English poor-law be reduced to the level of the Scottish, or should the



Scottish be raised to the level of the English? After due discussion the Scottish was raised. It is true that it was not brought exactly into the English form; but that it does not differ substantially is shown by the fact, that it has gradually risen in expense until the cost per head of population is only less than that of England.

In such cases a good deal may depend on the comparative intelligence of the people: a carefully educated and thoughtful race, might thrive on a system fatal to a race of less culture. Now the Scotch labourers are unquestionably better educated and more intelligent than those of England. This is especially true of rural districts; but even in Paisley "the general intelligence of the operatives" was a subject of remark.<sup>(50)</sup> If under the let-alone system, improvidence and beggary prevailed among educated and intelligent labourers, much more would they have probably prevailed among the more backward English labourers.

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It was alleged in the quotations of my Section II, that the tendency of a liberal poor-law was to multiply population, and to lower wages. It is now nearly thirty years since such a poor-law was imposed on Scotland: has it multiplied population and lowered wages?

First, as to population. We know the numbers of people living in 1801, 1811, 1821, 1831, 1841, 1851 and 1861. From 1801 to 1841 the old, scanty poor-law was in operation: the increments of population were as follow.

In the decade ending with 1811	.	13	per cent.
„ „ 1821	.	16	„
„ „ 1831	.	13	„
„ „ 1841	.	11	„

The years between 1841 and 1851  
were partly under either poor-law.

The increment was . . .  $9\frac{1}{2}$  „

From 1851 to 1861 the new poor-law  
prevailed. The increment was . 7 or 8 „

It seems then that from 1821, the decennial rates  
of increase were 16, 13, 11,  $9\frac{1}{2}$ , 8 per cent. I do  
not infer that the new poor-law caused a diminution  
of population, but it cannot be pretended that it  
caused an increase: during forty years there was a  
steady fall in the rate of increase: the new poor-law  
did not interfere with this fall.

If anyone objects that we ought not to look at  
the rate per cent. of increase, but rather at the  
absolute figures, I will satisfy him that to do this  
makes no difference as to the argument.

Increment in the decade ending 1811	.	206,620
„ „ 1821	.	287,768
„ „ 1831	.	271,658
„ „ 1841	.	255,070
„ „ 1851	.	250,600
„ „ 1861	.	226,024
		or 195,849

It will be seen that even the absolute increase was  
less and less in each decade after 1821, and that  
this rule holds good after the introduction of the  
new poor-law.

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If we now look at the wages paid in the two countries, we find that low as were English farm-wages a hundred years ago, those of Scotland were lower by a third: that the absence of a liberal poor-law left the Scottish shepherd and ploughman with scantier means of living than were enjoyed by their southern brethren. If it be replied that at that time Scotland was the worse cultivated and the poorer country of the two, and that the northern farmer could not afford to pay southern wages, my answer is, that according to this explanation, the rate of wages followed the greater or less wealth of the country, and that the English poor-law did not prevent the prevalence of comparatively high wages.

But Scotland now has a liberal poor-law. And it is remarkable that its rate of farm-wages has risen to that of England. I am not now contending that the new poor-law has caused this rise: I only maintain that the new poor-law has not prevented this rise, as it ought to have done, according to Malthus.

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A further objection is sometimes made: that legalized relief interferes with the exercise of private charity, and thus dries up the fountain of pity; while the pauper claims alms as a matter of right, and the ratepayer hands over grudgingly to the collector the sums he would have freely given in beneficence. This may in some cases be true. But unfortunately, private charity is very uncertain, and is often exercised least where it is most wanted. For example, I have shown that in Paisley, with a population of nearly 50,000, the whole sum raised in



a year, by voluntary efforts, was £1,227, and that at a time when 10,000 to 12,000 persons were in a state of starvation. This would give 3d. a week to each poor family of five persons, or a halfpenny a week to each man, woman, and child.

But recent inquiries have proved that alms privately administered, are much more abused and are far more apt to pauperise the receivers, than relief administered by experienced officers. Professor Jevons lately pointed this out.<sup>(62)</sup>

“I wish especially to point out that the wise precautions of the present poor-law are to a great extent counteracted by the mistaken humanity of charitable people. Could we sum up the amount of aid which is, in one way or other, extended by the upper to the lower classes, it would be almost of incredible amount, and would probably far exceed the cost of poor-law relief. But I am sorry to believe that, however great the good thus done, the evil results are probably greater. Nothing so surely as indiscriminate charity tends to create and perpetuate a class living in hopeless poverty. It is well known that those towns where charitable institutions and charitable people most abound are precisely those where the helpless poor are most numerous. It is even shown by Sir Charles Trevelyan, in a recent pamphlet, that the casual paupers have their London season and their country season, following the movements of those on whom they feed. Mr. Goschen and the poor-law authorities have of late begun to perceive that all their care in the administration of relief is frustrated by the over-abundant charity of private persons or religious societies.”

Suppose then the facts had been that Paisley in 1842 had voluntarily raised £5,000, and that in a recent year of distress it had raised only £1,000. If the paupers had of late been sufficiently relieved by legal officers, the change would be a matter for congratulation, inasmuch as the parish relief would be more wisely distributed, and with less risk of permanently pauperizing the artisans.

On the whole then, even if legal relief does lessen the amount of private almsgiving, I cannot believe that that is a serious objection to a liberal poor-law.

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From Scotland let us turn to Ireland, which had not formerly even the meagre poor-law that Scotland had.

The condition of Ireland a hundred years ago was carefully ascertained by Arthur Young, who in an unreadable book tells us what he saw: cabins made in a dry ditch with a roof of sticks and sods; husband, wife, children, pigs, fowls, and beggars, all eating out of the pot of potatoes set on the mud floor: but at any rate plenty for all. Out of this abundance of food and carelessness of comfort grew a vast increase of population, insufficiently kept down by the famines which attended any failure of the potato crop. Constant distress followed: and after the rebellion had been forgotten, and peace had brought leisure, our Government began to ask what could be done.

In 1812, the House of Commons appointed a Select Committee, to inquire into the state of health, and the general condition of the peasantry. The Com-



mittee<sup>(63)</sup> reported that the prevalence of contagious fever indicated severe general distress; and that the infection was spread by large bodies of beggars who roamed about in quest of alms: they recommended measures for putting down or diminishing mendicancy. They said that the existence of want of employment and of wide spread destitution, was so notorious as not to require evidence to establish it. They referred to a previous report by the Commissioners of Irish Bogs,<sup>(64)</sup> which had proved the existence of an "immense amount of land easily reclaimable, and convertible to the production of grain almost without limit for exportation:" and they declared that "the small extent to which the Commissioners' recommendations had been acted upon, demonstrated lamentably that want of capital which in Ireland utterly unnerved all effort for improvement. They recommended that Government should pay attention to the Irish fisheries, and should promote them by measures similar to those which had proved eminently successful in Scotland."

It appeared then, that the universal cultivation of the potato had led to "the boundless multiplication of human beings satisfied with the lowest condition of existence:" and "it is almost impossible in theory to estimate the mischiefs attendant on a redundant, a growing and unemployed population, converting that which ought to be the strength into the peril of the state." . . . "Such a population, excessive in proportion to the market for labour, exists and is growing in Ireland; a fact that demands the most serious attention of the legislature, and makes it not merely a matter of humanity, but of state policy,



to give every reasonable encouragement to industry."

This was the state of Ireland in 1819: of a country not corrupted by the administration of legal relief to the destitute, not hampered by any law of settlement which might have hindered the free circulation of labour.

In 1823 another inquiry was made: and it may have been hoped by theorists, that the severe discipline of adversity and distress would have begun to bear fruit in self-restraint, prudence, foresight.

The Select Committee now appointed, soon reported that in the year before, "a pressure of distress *wholly unexampled*, was felt, which directed the attention of government, of parliament, and of the British public, to the condition of the Irish peasantry, and led to the appropriation of large sums voted by the legislature, and subscriptions by individuals for the purpose of mitigating if not averting, that famine and disease which had extended to so alarming a degree in many districts."

The dearth had taken place where the potato, the principal food, had failed; but other crops not having been deficient, the prices of grain and oatmeal were moderate: indeed grain was being exported during the whole period of destitution. The distress was so general as to extend over half the area of the country, and it was believed that in the worst districts more than half the people were dependent upon charity.

Of course, the condition of the peasantry was "wretched and calamitous to the greatest degree." In the cabins there was no furniture, often no bed-clothes, nothing better than fern and straw. Yet

there was no unwillingness to work, as shown by the migrations at particular seasons in search of employment, and by the carrying for miles on men's backs of seaweed and sand for manure.

The wholly unexampled severity of the distress does not indicate any improvement in prudence and self-denial; and if it is objected that three or four years were too short a time to produce such a change of character, I reply that *laissez faire* had prevailed not for three or four years but from time immemorial, and that during the half century since Arthur Young's time, the Irish condition under that severe regime had got worse and worse. Could a poor-law, could a law of settlement, have made matters worse?

Another inquiry in 1830: another Select Committee: another Report. The same sad tale is repeated: want of employment, destitution, fever. Fever was then, as it still is, one of the chronic scourges of Ireland. It was said here (as indeed it is generally said) that it follows in the wake of dearth. Dublin had suffered greatly; having had in one year 60,000 patients in the fever hospitals. Going back to 1817, it was declared<sup>(66)</sup> that in that one year there had been a million and a half persons attacked, of whom 65,000 had died. At that time Acts were passed, under which fever hospitals were generally established.

We might have feared from the existence of two races in Ireland, the one race holding most of the property, the other having little but misery for an inheritance, that there would have been but scant sympathy with the poor in their sufferings. We are



told however,<sup>(67)</sup> that the charitable institutions dependent on voluntary contributions, were very numerous and were liberally supported. "Among them will be found schools, hospitals, Magdalen-asylums, houses of refuge, orphan establishments, lying-in hospitals, societies for the relief of the sick and indigent, mendicity associations, and charitable loan societies." It was remarked that all these associations, though they only mitigated the chronic misery, yet fell heavily on the benevolent who maintained them:<sup>(68)</sup> and this led to the question whether they ought not to be supplemented by rates.

This year 1830, it will be remembered, was the date of the revolution which seated Louis Philippe on the French throne; a revolution which while it indirectly separated Belgium from Holland, caused that excitement in England which restored the Whigs to power after a quarter of a century of exclusion, and enabled them to carry their bold Reform Bill. This Bill was not finally passed till 1832; and in the very same year measures were adopted for reconstructing the English Poor-Laws.

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In the following year, 1833, a Commission was appointed, "to inquire into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland, and into the various institutions at present established by law for their relief; and also whether any and what further remedial measures appear to be requisite to ameliorate the condition of the Irish poor or any portion of them."

In the report of this Commission is found an epitome of remedies proposed by amateur witnesses :



it reads like the account of a meeting of the Social Science Association.<sup>(70)</sup>

“One party attributed all the poverty and wretchedness of the country to an asserted extreme use of ardent spirits, and proposed a system for repressing illicit distillation, for preventing smuggling, and for substituting beer and coffee. Another party found the cause in the combination among workmen and proposed vigorous laws against trades unions. Others again, were equally confident, that the reclamation of the bogs and waste lands was the only practicable remedy. A fourth party declared the nature of the existing connexion between landlord and tenant to be the root of all the evil. Pawnbroking, redundant population, absence of capital, peculiar religious tenets and religious differences, political excitement, want of education, the mal-administration of justice, the state of prison discipline, want of manufactures and of inland navigation, with a variety of other circumstances, were each supported by their various advocates with earnestness and ability, as being either alone, or jointly with some other, the primary cause of all the evils of society; and loan funds, emigration, the repression of political excitement, introduction of manufactures, and the extension of inland navigation, were accordingly proposed each as the principal means by which the improvement of Ireland could be promoted.”

The Commissioners declined to report on the merits of all the schemes suggested. Indeed, their recommendations<sup>(71)</sup> were of the mildest kind: such as that provision should be made for convalescents discharged from hospitals, for patients having chronic

or incurable disease, and still more for the poor blind and deaf and dumb. Two years and a half of work resulted in these trifling proposals, after a reiteration of the common-places about destitution and fever.<sup>(72)</sup> It was known or conjectured that the Commissioners had differed in opinion: one party desiring to recommend the application of the principle of the English poor-law, the other leaning to the slighter and more voluntary system of Scotland.

But though the formal Report hushed up these differences of opinion, the dissension broke out into pamphlets and speeches; and the recent measures for changing the English poor-law gave force and fire to the discussion.

The Irish facts reported were startling enough to those unacquainted with the subject. It was stated that the earnings of labourers generally came to about 2s. or 2s. 6d. a week the year round: that it was therefore impossible for them to provide against cessation of employment, sickness, or old age.<sup>(73)</sup>

“Their habitations are wretched hovels, several of a family sleep together upon straw, or upon the bare ground, sometimes with a blanket, sometimes even without so much to cover them; their food commonly consists of dry potatoes, and with these they are at times so scantily supplied, as to be obliged to stint themselves to one spare meal in the day. There are even instances of persons being driven by hunger to seek sustenance in wild herbs. They sometimes get a herring or a little milk, but they never get meat except at Christmas, Easter, and Shrovetide. Some go in search of employment to Great Britain during the harvest, others wander



through Ireland with the same view. The wives and children of many are occasionally obliged to beg, but they do so reluctantly and with shame, and in general go to a distance from home that they may not be known. Mendicity too is the sole resource of the aged and impotent of the poorer classes in general, when children or relatives are unable to support them. To it therefore crowds are driven for the means of existence, and the knowledge that such is the fact leads to an indiscriminate giving of alms, which encourages idleness, imposture, and general crime."

The reliance here mentioned on near relatives, in old age or impotence, is stated by other writers, as one cause of early and improvident marriages. In the absence of legal relief, it was as terrible to an Irishman to want a son in his old age, as according to a proverbial saying it is to a Chinese.

This was the condition into which Ireland, without any pretence of a poor-law, had fallen. Sixty years earlier, the peasants, though badly housed and badly clothed, had in ordinary years plenty of potatoes, and in many cases milk or buttermilk. But the population had outgrown the means of support.<sup>(73a)</sup>

As the competition for land had become more and more intense, rents had risen extravagantly. The farmer who had a long lease sublet his land at an advanced rate, and lived as a middleman on the profit. Again, the farmer of forty acres who had several sons might have provided for them by "sending one into the army, another into the navy, and then leaving his holding to a third, and thus the farm would have been continued in its first state." But,



instead of this he subdivided his holding and gave up a portion of it to each son: the sons did the same for their sons,<sup>(74)</sup> "until the farm of forty acres was cut up into holdings of one, two, or three acres, each holding occupied by its particular owner, and yielding no more than was barely sufficient for his subsistence."

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All these evils arose under the practice of *laissez faire*, the panacea of too many political economists: it cannot be said that a poor-law was chargeable with the complicated and intense misery that has been described. Malthus too, and his followers, asked the world to believe that a poor-law lowered the rate of wages. During the great war with Napoleon no doubt, when bread was doubled or trebled in price, the wants of the farm labourers were partially supplied by parish relief in aid of wages; the labourer received part of his maintenance from his employer and part from the overseers: so far the farmers paid less wages, and the labourer got his earnings made up under another name.

But let us see whether Irish wages were raised by the absence of a poor-law. Until the middle of last century, the cottier system prevailed: a labourer was provided with land enough to keep a cow, and he was bound to work for his landlord at sixpence a day: a man with his cow, pig, patch of potatoes, and occasional wages, might live comfortably. Unfortunately, as population multiplied, there were numbers of labourers who could not get situations as cottiers: these wandered about looking for employment, and

were willing to receive the wages of sixpence a day, without the privilege of a cow's grass. Gradually the landlords and farmers came to employ these cheaper hands, and the cottier system fell into disuse. Wages became sixpence a day without any privileges : a ruinous deterioration !

Now it cannot be said that a poor-law was the cause of it. On the contrary, a poor-law, accompanied as it always is by a law of settlement, would have either prevented or delayed this alteration. Unemployed labourers wandered into a parish and sat down on the bog : the farmers or landlords had no pecuniary motive for hindering them, and they had even a pecuniary motive for encouraging them, since they benefited by the consequent fall in the rate of wages. But if there had been a poor-rate, the farmers would have had a strong pecuniary motive for preventing these incursions, ending in the birth of children who would get a settlement in the district. In conversation with an Irish landlord, I was regretting that ever since the famine, potatoes had continued the staple food ; and I asked him what was to prevent the former increase of population, and another famine as bad as the last : he replied that the introduction of the poor-law had made a great difference ; for that now the landlords and other rate payers took care that no unnecessary labourers should establish themselves in a district. But in this way not only would famine be mitigated : the rate of wages would in ordinary years be kept from being forced down by competition from without.

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Then as to begging, one of the curses of old countries : it can hardly be maintained that a poor-law promotes it ; though some may have the audacity to say that by encouraging idleness and improvidence a poor-law causes more mendicity than it prevents. Let such reasoners remember what Irish beggars were formerly, nay what they are now under a very slight poor-rate.

Vagrancy was an old Irish grievance. Among other laws against it,<sup>(75)</sup> there was one of Queen Anne's reign (6th Anne, cap. 11) amended by another in George II's reign (9th Geo. II, cap. 6) by which idle vagrants, or pretended Irish gentlemen, who would not work, might on the presentment of a Grand Jury, be transported for seven years. It seems that these statutes had really been enforced, and that 160 persons had annually been committed under them, one year with another.

I have said in a previous page, how wives and children turned out to beg, shamefacedly and at a distance from their neighbours : how old and impotent people, destitute and friendless, had no other resource. I have also seen it stated that just before the fields of potatoes were ripe, the old crop being in many cases exhausted, the poor people stole habitually from their neighbours' farms enough to ward off starvation : the owners often conniving at the theft.

Surely a poor-law must be a less evil than aggravated vagrancy and mendicity and habitual thievery.

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I have already mentioned that the eleven Commissioners of 1833-35, were divided in opinion. The reasons urged on both sides, are fully set out in Sir George Nicholls's work. The large majority of eight<sup>(76)</sup> agreed on sixteen propositions, which they called "reasons for recommending *voluntary* associations for the relief of the poor." These eight gentlemen, including the Archbishop of Dublin and the Roman Catholic Archbishop, held that judging by the English poor-law, an attempt to relieve Irish destitution generally by means of a compulsory fund, would lead to unlimited expense. On the other hand they found that:—

"Though such cases of distress might and probably would be, relieved by spontaneous charity, yet the leaving of such cases of distress to be relieved by the operation of undirected benevolence, inevitably leads to an extensive vagrancy. This is now the state of Ireland. On the most moderate computation the amount of spontaneous alms given, chiefly by the smaller farmers and cottars, is from one to two millions sterling annually; but being given without system or without inquiry to the good and to the bad, the really destitute and the pretenders to destitution receive alike their maintenance out of the earnings of the industrious, to their great impoverishment, and to the great injury of the morals and good order of the kingdom."

The remedy proposed was "to endeavour to bring voluntary almsgiving under regulation and system, so as to direct it to the relief of real distress exclusively." The proposal was supported by "the example of an organized system of relief for the

poor by voluntary contribution in Scotland, *where it has been eminently successful.*"

The minority of three assigned their reasons rather more shortly: and as these carried the day and became the foundation of a compulsory system, they are worth particular attention.<sup>(77)</sup>

"Because—in the lamentably distressed state of the Irish poor, any system of relief to be effectual must be comprehensive, uniform, and prompt; whilst the very constitution of voluntary associations proclaims that their operations must be tardy; and circumstanced as Ireland is in the distribution of her population, must be partial and precarious.

Because—it is notorious that many contributions in name voluntary, are frequently obligations of the severest character. The pressure of such a (voluntary) tax must be unequal. The class least removed from want, would furnish as it now does, the largest number of contributors, and to the greatest amount; whilst the wealthier classes, resident as well as absentee, would in a great measure be exempted from the liability of contributing in proportion to their wealth, or even from contributing at all."

The notion of regulating and systematizing voluntary efforts, is shown to be utopian: and this conclusion is arrived at:—

"We are therefore of opinion that the fund should be obtained by an assessment, wholly and not partially compulsory; and that it will be most efficiently managed by elective boards of guardians as in England, directed by responsible public officers whose proceedings shall be subjected to the strictest public scrutiny."



This opinion was supported by Sir George Cornwall Lewis, then a young man, and one of the Assistant Commissioners. He urged the adoption of the English system, and dwelt upon the necessity of using the workhouse test.<sup>(78)</sup>

“As the danger of introducing a poor-law into Ireland is confessedly great, I can conceive no reason for not taking every possible security against its abuse. Now if anything has been proved more decisively than another by the operation of the Poor-Law Amendment Act in England, it is that the workhouse is an all-sufficient test of *destitution*, and that it is the only test; that it succeeds as a mode of relief, and that all other modes fail. Why therefore, this tried guarantee against poor-law abuses is not to be employed, when abuses are, under the best system, almost inevitable, it seems difficult to understand. If such a safeguard were to be dispensed with anywhere, it would be far less dangerous to dispense with it in England than in Ireland.”

This opinion prevailed: a poor-law was established: workhouses were built: the absolute denial of outdoor relief in ordinary circumstances was adopted.

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Has this poor-law produced in Ireland the bad effects attributed to schemes of legal relief? Has it failed to accomplish the objects proposed?

We shall be told that it failed, because it did not prevent the great famine which occurred a dozen years later. I reply that it was never imagined of any poor-law that it could prevent famine: I may



quote the words of Mr. Bickers, one of the Commissioners of 1833-35.<sup>(79)</sup>

“After all the assistance that can be extended to Ireland by good laws, and every encouragement afforded to the poor by temporary employment of a public nature, and every assistance that emigration and other modes of relief can yield, her *real* improvement must spring from herself, her own inhabitants, and her own indigenous institutions, irrespective of legislation, and English interference. It must be of a moral nature; the improvement of the high and low, the rich and the poor. Without this, her tenantry will be still wretched, and her landlords will command no respect; with it, a new face will be given to the whole people.”

The famine was a consequence of the miserable economical condition of Ireland; where there was a great excess of population, living contentedly in the most squalid fashion, with no food but potatoes and of them an insufficient quantity. The blight came and destroyed the root, and the poverty stricken inhabitants had no resource: not possessing even clothes and furniture which in Great Britain go to the pawnbroker, (the poor man's banker), and furnish a temporary aid.

The poor-rates proved insufficient to supply the wants of the people. So would any poor-rates in a case where the main food of a country was blighted, and the inhabitants had no resources for the purchase of other food. In England we fortunately live principally on wheat, a far hardier plant than the potato; though even in the case of wheat, the English yield is now believed to be twice as great in the best year

as it is in the worst: but when the crop is bad we import more than usual and are able to pay for it, and by the ordinary channels of trade we distribute it among the consumers. If each family however raised its own wheat on a patch of ground, and had no other resource, the failure of the wheat crop would bring starvation, just as the failure of the potato crop brought starvation to Ireland.

No poor-law could fill such a vast gap. The English poor-rates, so far as they are used for relief, amount to . . . 6, 7, or 8 millions £; the aggregate annual wages of England (excluding Scotland and Ireland) are variously estimated as 200, 250, or 300 millions £.

Suppose the Guardians throughout England were called upon to find for the poor a fourth of their usual income, that is, 50, 60, or 70 millions £, or eight times the present rates: would even our liberal poor-law be sufficient?

In a recent example, that of the Cotton Dearth in Lancashire, our poor-law was fairly tried: but it was supplemented by a liberal outpouring of private charity from all parts of the empire: without this it would have been scarcely equal to its task in the poorer unions.

What comparison however, can be made between the poor-laws of the two countries? In Ireland, workhouses had been built, and the destitute were admitted into them, while outdoor relief was refused. But when the famine came, the workhouses could not receive the nation at large: outdoor relief was the thing wanted, though a sufficiency of such relief could not possibly be supplied by a poor-rate.



The slightness of the Irish poor-law as compared with the English, will be seen from these figures.<sup>(50)</sup>

		ENGLAND. IRELAND.	
		per Cent.	per Cent.
1859-60, long after the famine	} Number of paupers relieved to whole population .	} 4½	1
Cost per head of whole population . .		6s. 1s.6d.	

It seems then, that in poor Ireland, the persons relieved were only proportionally a fourth of those relieved in rich England.

It seems also, that poor Ireland spent proportionally only one fourth of what was spent by rich England.

If our liberal poor-law could not without help, provide for the pauperism caused by the Cotton Dearth, how could it be expected that the meagre Irish poor-law could supply the wants caused by the failure of the potato in every district?

It would be absurd then to depreciate the Irish poor-law on the ground of the famine, just as it would be absurd to depreciate the English poor-law on the ground of the Cotton Dearth. In both cases the mortal visitation came from without, and was in no sense invited by the poor-law. In Ireland, as in Lancashire, though in a far less degree than in Lancashire, the poor-law broke the force of the first shock. Private charity, however spontaneous and ready, does not begin to act at once. Amateur beneficence, experienced in imposture, and distant from the suffering, needs a loud and continued cry to set it in motion; and thousands will be pinched or will die before anything effectual is done. The



legal relieving office is open at all times, and has a staff of officials who can at once appreciate distress. In great calamities such as those of Ireland and of Lancashire, voluntary benevolence is an admirable supplement, but it cannot promptly and effectually take the place of legal relief.

To make the Irish illustration complete, I must observe, as in the case of Scotland, that the introduction of a poor-law has not been followed by the evils which gloomy prophets foretold. Population has not multiplied; wages have not fallen: self-reliance and resolution (judged by emigration, no bad test) have not been relaxed.

Population I say, has not multiplied. On the contrary it has decreased wonderfully; <sup>(81)</sup> having fallen from  $8\frac{1}{4}$  millions in 1845, to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  millions in 1867: a diminution of extraordinary amount. I do not pretend that the new poor-law has caused the reduction; I only point out that it has not prevented the action of those natural forces by which it has been brought about.

The principal mode by which the diminution has taken place is that of emigration. The famine unhappily, followed as usual by pestilence, killed off great numbers of persons: but some time later, at the census of 1851, the numbers were still  $6\frac{1}{2}$  millions, and yet these dropped down during the next sixteen years to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  millions. The total emigration from the United Kingdom had been moderate for some years before the famine, but then it suddenly augmented and became really vast.

Total Emigration from the United

Kingdom <sup>(82)</sup>	.	.	.	.	.	1842	.	128,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1843	.	57,000
"	Before the famine					1844	.	71,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1845	.	94,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1846	.	130,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1847	.	258,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1848	.	248,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1849	.	300,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1850	.	281,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1851	.	336,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1852	.	368,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1853	.	330,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1854	.	323,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1855	.	177,000
"	"	"	"	"	"	1856	.	177,000

During the eleven years, 1846-56, about three millions of persons left the United Kingdom, and the greater part were Irish. Now emigration is a good test of the self-reliance and energy of a people, because it is a sacrifice of present convenience to the hope of future well being. To leave your home or your cabin, and put yourself in a confined floating prison with the risk of drowning, to desert for ever the place of your birth and the familiar scenes of your childhood, is a great shock to all persons, and especially to the ignorant. Resolution and self-reliance are necessary for carrying out such a scheme: these qualities, said certain theorists, would be destroyed by the introduction of a poor-law: but it was many years after the introduction of the poor-law that the Irish exhibited resolution and self-reliance on a grand scale by their wonderful exodus. The

poor-law, though it did not cause the exodus, certainly did not prevent it.

Wages again, we are told, ought to be lowered by a poor-law: in Ireland, under the poor-law, they have risen considerably. A hundred years ago, as I have said, the common rate was sixpence a day with a cow's grass: then it fell to sixpence a day or less without a cow's grass. Wages have since then doubled. An attempt has been made to show that the shilling now buys no more than the sixpence before the famine; yet I cannot doubt from all I hear and see, that allowing for regularity of employment, the year's gains reckoned in food and other commodities are far higher than they were twenty-five years ago. The Poor-Law then, has not been followed by a lowering of the labourer's condition, but by an improvement of it.

Population has not multiplied: wages have not fallen: self-reliance and resolution judged by emigration, have not been relaxed. On the contrary, notwithstanding the poor-law, population has diminished amazingly: the aggregate gains of the labourer have increased: self-reliance and resolution, judged by emigration, have been greatly developed.

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Comparing the three kingdoms then, the facts seem to be these. In England there has been a liberal poor-law during nearly three hundred years: wages have been far higher than in the two other kingdoms; and though population has increased fast, wages have greatly risen, even the purchasing power considered. In Scotland till the present



generation, there was very scanty poor relief; wages were lower by a third than those of England: a more liberal poor-law was introduced; wages rose to the English level, and population increased more slowly than before. In Ireland there was no poor-law whatever; under this *laissez faire*, and in the absence of all law of settlement, wandering labourers beat down wages to a starvation point and destroyed the cottier system: a poor-law was introduced; emigration multiplied, population fell, wages and condition rose. It was not the poor-law which worked these wonders, but it did not prevent the wonders from being worked. There is nothing in all this which should restrain us from granting legal relief, when such a proceeding seems on other grounds desirable: there is nothing to support the vaticinations of the prophets of ill; nothing to justify the dogmatical denunciation of poor-laws by certain economists.

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My information about other countries except Paris of late is not sufficiently detailed to allow such a comparison of their condition with that of England, as I have made with regard to that of Scotland and Ireland. But we know generally that the legal relief granted in England has for centuries exceeded that of the continental states. According to the enemies of poor-laws then, we should have expected to find in England a greater excess of population, a lower rate of wages, a worse general condition, than those existing abroad. Yet take the case of old France. At the period of the great revolution,

that country was overpopulated, almost as Ireland has since been: the *métayer* system generally prevailed on large estates, and therefore we can scarcely compare rates of wages in rural labour; but in manufactures Arthur Young found French rates far below English; nor is there any doubt that throughout France there was a very low condition of living, great discomfort and uneasiness. Even now, after all the talk about popular rights, the wages of France are far below those of England. The same is true of Germany, and of continental states generally.

Setting aside the question why wages have been higher here than elsewhere, there is nothing in the state of the English as compared with that of continental nations, to support the proposition that poor-laws lower wages and deteriorate the condition of a people.

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## V.

IN the last Section I inquired whether the knowledge within our reach as to the condition of other countries, supported the diatribes of certain economists: I concluded that they did not.

But this is not sufficient: it may fairly be asked what good is done by a poor-law, and what is the evidence of its necessity: it is not enough to show that it does no harm; we want to know what benefits attend it.

To those who deny the utility of all charity it is vain to talk: I have nothing in common with those who say:—let everyone take care of himself and his

own family: failing to do so he must bear the consequences: and if his estimable wife and his innocent children pine with hunger, sicken with want and disease, and die all of them untended, that is his affair, not mine: painful as the example is, it is necessary for the teaching of all who see it.

The many who talk in this way are whimsical: the few who act in this way are brutal. I address myself to those who have common sense and common sympathies: who feel that a world without charity is a detestable thing; and who would shrink from hardening the hearts of their children by such lessons as I have quoted, just as they would shrink from introducing them to houses of debauch.<sup>(83)</sup>

“As M. de Malherbes and Madame de Staël were driving together in the Place Vendôme, in 1785, the horses threw down a man who was absolutely dying of hunger, but who still kept his high spirit, and, when the coachman declared what his state was, proudly and angrily answered that he had but that moment left a *cabaret*, endeavouring to turn into ridicule the alarm of the pitying domestic. He tried to walk away, — but stumbled and fell from sheer weakness. During his fainting fit his pockets were searched and his address found. M. de Malherbes went to the dwelling of this unfortunate, and there beheld — and we need not add relieved — a family of spectres who had not tasted nourishment for three days.” Thoughtless and wicked M. de Malherbes, to rob the public of so edifying an example of the natural consequences of proud improvidence!<sup>(84)</sup>

Thirty years ago, “an Irishman with a wife and six children (five of them at home) had employment



in some lead works, and was able—great luxury—to afford a whole room for himself. In a pecuniary sense, the employment was good; but it was most unhealthy: the poor man's strength gave way under it, and he was sent to a hospital, there patched up, and told, on his discharge, that if he returned to the works it would kill him. But what was he to do? There were the children crying for bread. He *did* return to the works, was accepted and entered again on his labour; but, as he had been warned, he was soon obliged to fly for his life. Just at this time, the eldest boy, who was about fifteen, came home, having been shipwrecked, and to get him a new kit to go to sea again most of the necessaries were pawned. The parents were sober, honest, and industrious, struggled hard to live, and suffered in silence. In that dreadfully severe weather which visited us at the end of January and beginning of February, our attention was drawn to a poor girl sitting out in the streets in the snow, in almost transparent clothing, trying to turn a penny by selling chesnuts. This led to inquiry, and their room was visited. The scene that presented itself is indescribable: there was no furniture, not even a bed, scarcely any body-clothing, and yet there was an attempt at decency and neatness; for the floor was swept, and an old quilt, their only night covering, was hung up to hide the lair of rags on which the wretches stretched themselves through the long dreary wintry hours of darkness."

The narrator of the tale got the unfortunates relieved and put into a way of earning a living. Did he indeed, do wrong?

But there are in London, and in every town, hundreds or thousands of such cases. Charity then, almsgiving, relief of distress, are absolutely necessary; and as for those who deny this, I recommend to their attention these remarks of M. Dupin, in his defence of Sir Robert Wilson, Mr. Bruce, and Mr. Hutchinson, who were charged with helping Lavalette to escape.<sup>(85)</sup>

“Unhappy fruit of our dissensions! Evil is become so common, and good actions are so rare, that people are no longer willing to believe in virtue, nor can persuade themselves that three men are to be found, generous enough to save another, simply from a sentiment of humanity! How manners change with times! At Athens—the people of which are cited for their levity, though the Areopagus was celebrated for its justice—a young man was condemned to death for having killed a dove, which, pursued by a sparrow-hawk, flew to take refuge in his bosom. They thought that *he who was without pity would never prove a good citizen*. And amongst us, in the nineteenth century, men are to be condemned for having saved the life of another man who placed his fate in their hands.”

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Pity, sympathy with the distressed, charity, almsgiving, should be encouraged: but how are they best carried into action?

Malthus was not one of those who denounced all beneficence: he only held that legalized doles were no charity. Relieve the distressed by all means; but let it be done spontaneously and graciously as the

result of pity and sympathy, and not through the grudging hands of overseers in answer to a claim of right. Let us look at private almsgiving in our own days, and determine whether it really effects its object; that of diminishing the sum of human misery: and whether if the poor-law were abolished, private almsgiving would do its work better.

Of all forms of alms that of giving halfpence in the streets is the worst. For myself, though I cannot boast with Archbishop Whately that I never gave to a beggar, it is seldom indeed that I do so: but there are occasions when one's resolution is severely tested: and walking in London on a sleety night with an austere political economist, I have seen him give a sixpence to a half-clothed girl. I agree with my friend Mr. Frederic Hill, that the insufficient provision for the casual poor till very lately, especially in London, puts us in the painful position of "having to choose between the risk of refusing relief to the really necessitous (with a danger of thereby driving him into crime,) and of encouraging imposture and idleness."

Indiscriminate giving of pence then is condemned by all, except on some extreme occasions: it is worse than legal relief a thousand times over. So strongly was this felt by the last Irish Commissioners whom I have already mentioned, that they proposed<sup>(87)</sup> "to endeavour to bring voluntary almsgiving under regulations and system, so as to direct it to the relief of real distress exclusively."

It cannot be doubted that mendicancy, in the absence of a poor-law, becomes a calling. Most persons know Sir Walter Scott's account<sup>(88)</sup> of the



old Edinburgh Bedesman, who made so good an income out of his legalized begging that he was able to maintain a son as a student in the University: and who out of gratitude to another student who had shown the son some civilities, asked him to a Saturday dinner "on shoulder of mutton and potatoes," adding, "ye'll put on your clean sark, as I have company."

An anonymous writer on Mendicity,<sup>(89)</sup> quotes this well known passage as the hunted Edgar's picture of a beggar among our ancestors.

"My face I'll grime with filth;  
Blanket my loins; elfe all my hair in knots;  
And with presented nakedness outface  
The winds, and persecutions of the sky.  
The country gives me proof and precedent  
Of bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,  
Strike in their numb'd and mortify'd bare arms  
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;  
And with this horrible object, from low farms,  
Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes and mills,  
Sometimes with lunatic bans, sometimes with pray'rs,  
Inforce their charity."

In the absence of a poor-law, or with one scarcely yet introduced, to such a pitch of effrontery had private almsgiving brought English beggars.

It was bad enough in Ireland a generation ago.<sup>(90)</sup>

"In Ireland misery is a trade. The best paid class of labourers are the beggars, and therefore every man who is not restrained by a sense of degradation becomes a beggar, or sends out his wife and children to beg. Even the most enterprising and

industrious class—those who visit England in harvest-time—beg their way back: the sovereigns they have earned being carefully sewed up in the lining of their jackets, or sent home by a friend. The curse of Ireland has been repeated confiscations of property, spoliation, and a long course of misgovernment, which have prevented the gradual formation of a middle class. But an evil only second to that is mendicity. Begging is to the Irish peasant what the parish was to the English labourer (under the old poor-law)—an apparently inexhaustible source of supply; and a spirit of recklessness and improvidence has been the result alike in both cases.”

In Paris before the revolution, an amusing proof was given of the profitableness of mendicancy. M. Peuchet gives an account of a quarterly feast of beggars in old France: the narrator whom he quotes, was a police agent who had got admission.<sup>(91)</sup>

The document is headed:—“On the dinner which the staff of the fraternity of beggars of the capital gave, in the year 1786, at a wine house in the rue St. Jacques.”

A broad horseshoe table was arranged for nearly 200 persons. The host introduced the police agent as one of his nephews, and put him among the managers of the feast. The host having delegated his authority to him, confined his own attention to the kitchen, where no less than ten assistants were at work. When the dinner hour arrived, great soup tureens, carefully kept hot, were placed on a table inside the horseshoe, and the glistening eyes of the guests showed how exquisite were the contents.

Sucking pigs followed. The whole feast gave great satisfaction. Some of the guests came in *fiacres*: the politeness at table was quite equal to that seen among the rich bourgeois in the rue des Lombards.

There was of course, a great metamorphosis among these people. Some of them, generally in rags and so dirty that "one would not touch them with a pair of tongs," were now washed and smartly dressed. The lame walked, the deaf heard. Some really blind men were there, accompanied by girls chosen for their emaciation; and when some polite guests presented flowers to these living skeletons, the smile of gratitude "*aurait fait fuir le diable; il m'ôta l'appétit.*" But these fleshless girls proved quite strong enough to lift the heavy tables. These were removed after the dessert and the liqueurs, on a signal from the musicians who had been playing during the dinner. Then the police agent had to leave, and the doors were close shut. The price of the entertainment was six livres, besides the charge for liqueurs and coffee. It was supposed that after the doors were shut, the interests of the self-constituted guild were discussed.

Among these beggars there were criminals; and about this time (just before the revolution), many such were broken on the wheel for assaults, incendiarism, robberies, and murders.<sup>(92)</sup> So vigorous was the attack, that the bands were broken up. If however, we may judge by the wild beasts who played their part in the revolution, not only in Paris but in all the great towns and even in the country, robbing, sacking, violating, murdering, septembrising, we must



conclude that only a small part of these noxious animals had been destroyed.

These ill conditioned creatures, the scourge of an imperfect civilization, lived for the most part on alms, indiscriminately given.

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It seems then, that private charity, before the English poor-law, private charity before the Irish poor-law, private charity in the absence of a French poor-law, produced effects as bad, nay far worse, than those which followed from a corrupted and ill administered poor-law in England.

But let us come to the present day. The practice of indiscriminate almsgiving is generally condemned and in practice very much diminished. Associations have taken the place of individuals, and to the great advantage of all concerned where there is discretion as well as zeal. It has lately however, been clearly shown that even associations are capable of doing great mischief, by encouraging idleness and improvidence and by rendering the trade of a beggar profitable. So strongly has this been felt in London that an effort, faint and unsuccessful, has been lately made to get the metropolitan charitable associations to co-operate, and to consolidate themselves under a head, in order to obviate the present evils, and to get rid of the clashing of this private charity with the increasing efforts of the poor-law authorities to root out vagrancy and mendicity, while efficaciously relieving inevitable destitution.

Individual charity labours of course, under the disadvantage of being unable to distinguish impostors,

and engrained beggars, from the deserving poor: this is especially true in great towns. Societies may have their experienced agents, and may thus avoid many mistakes. But where there are many societies, one giving bread, another lending blankets, a third offering nightly shelter, a tenth or twentieth giving general assistance, there inevitably follow crops of trading mendicants and impostors. Want is generally better dealt with by poor-law officers: always excepting however, the cases of destitute persons well known to the charitable; cases of former servants or workmen, of widows and children with whom the givers have long been acquainted; cases few in number.

I grant then, that there is a field in which private charity may employ itself with the greatest advantage. It is well, if possible, to keep a decent family from resorting to the parish, and still better to keep it from once entering the workhouse. I can mention one case as a sample of many. A well conducted driver of a locomotive married a respectable maid-servant: within two years he became consumptive, lingered, exhausted what money he had, and died; leaving his widow with two infants and a little furniture. The widow got a small allowance from the parish, but could not live on it, and could scarcely do anything while her children were in arms. A lady asked me whether it was better for the young woman to go into the house: I advised her to prevent this, and adopting my opinion she spent £10 in helping her for two years.

But private charity generally is better applied to the relief of those who cannot or will not apply for



legal relief: to those of the middle class who fall into want. I remember a case of an estimable clergyman who had a church in a district where all were of the working classes, and who was so pinched for income that on one occasion he wanted bread for his children. Indeed, the fact that there exists an organization for collecting gentlemen's cast-off clothes and distributing them among the clergy, is a proof how wide spread is clerical destitution. Among other professional men there are numbers not much better off. The poverty of such men and of their wives and children, is the most pitiable of all poverty. Here is a field wide enough for private charity.

As regards the working classes generally, making particular exception for such cases as I have mentioned before, I believe it is better to leave destitution to be relieved by the guardians; who raise large funds by rates which fall with moderate fairness on all; not taxing the liberal and sparing the avaricious, but compelling everyone to do his share.

There is a mass of want always existing, far beyond the power of private purses to relieve, and still farther beyond the power of private attention to investigate. The guardians too, in all doubtful cases can offer the workhouse as a test.

What can private beneficence do with the sickness always existing? "It is no new theory that sickness is the ordinary commencement of a large percentage of poverty. According to evidence taken before the Poor-Law Committee of the House of Commons, some 72 per cent. of paupers were made so in the first instance by the operation of sickness."<sup>(93)</sup>

What could private beneficence do with the insane



and the idiots, the ascertained number of whom is continually increasing? It was said of these ten years ago :

“ We have caused the lists of lunatics, idiots, and other persons of unsound mind chargeable to the poor-rates, 1st January, 1869, to be tabulated. It appears from these that in 646 unions and single parishes under boards of guardians, there were 31,543 insane paupers, of whom 22,378 were lunatics, and 9,163 idiots. The whole number of paupers, inclusive of the insane, was on the same day 850,896. In regard to the sexes (of the insane) it will be seen that 13,896 were males, and 17,647 females. These paupers were maintained in the following establishments, or were lodged with strangers, or resided with their relatives, viz. : 16,201 in county or borough lunatic asylums ; 1,143 in registered hospitals, or in licensed houses ; 8,210 in union or parish work-houses ; 785 in lodgings, or boarded out ; 5,204 residing with relatives.”

What private charity could deal with this mass of misery? How could additional voluntary hospitals be established and supported, while even the present hospitals and dispensaries tax to the utmost the powers and the ingenuity of their managers, who are obliged to have recourse to sensational circulars, sermons, concerts, and odious bazaars to raise the necessary funds?

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But besides the sick and the insane, besides the widows and children, how many able-bodied men and women are from time to time deprived of resources

by visitations of nature, or by social and commercial disturbances ! An unusually long frost for example, throws hundreds of thousands of men out of employment. In countries like Russia and Canada where every winter is long and severe, it may be expected that labourers should make provision against it ; but when it happens that severe frost begins in England so early as November or lasts so late as March, great distress follows ; and however the well paid bricklayer and stonemason may struggle through such a season, it is vain to hope that the hodman and the navvy will live without assistance.

In manufacturing towns there are great fluctuations in trade and employment. It is not often that such wide spread ruin occurs as that caused by the American Civil War and the consequent Cotton Dearth : but on a smaller scale great distress is frequent. A few years before the Lancashire distress there was great distress at Coventry, partly caused by Sir Robert Peel's fiscal changes : destitution so severe that the whole nation was appealed to for aid to the local resources. The uncertainties of manufactures are nothing new : eighty years ago Arthur Young points them out in the following passage.<sup>(95)</sup>

“Go to any town in this part of the kingdom without a manufacture, and where poor rates are low ; establish a woollen manufacture, let it be as flourishing as you can suppose ; come twenty years hence, you will find poor-rates doubled, perhaps trebled. Is it then to be said that manufactures are mischievous ? By no means : it is the poor-laws that should be condemned, and them only. They are so grossly absurd, that giving the poor the means of living, gives them



also the power of being burthensome to others; a strong fact in the woollen fabric, because *it is subject to great fluctuations*. The spinning business is sometimes very good; oftentimes very bad, and then many of the poor will not do it all, but go to the parish for maintenance rather than earn twopence at a business by which they have at another time earned a groat."

Malthus found the same in other trades.<sup>(96)</sup>

"In addition to the fluctuations arising from the changes from peace to war and from war to peace, it is well known how subject particular manufactures are to fail from the caprices of taste. The weavers of Spitalfields were plunged into the most severe distress by the fashion of muslins instead of silks: and great numbers of workmen in Sheffield and Birmingham were for a time thrown out of employment owing to the adoption of shoestrings and covered buttons, instead of buckles and metal buttons. Our manufactures, taken in the mass, have increased with prodigious rapidity, but in particular places they have failed; and the parishes where this has happened are invariably loaded with a crowd of poor in the most distressed and miserable condition."

Miners too have their share of troubles. A few years ago Cornwall like Coventry, was in great distress, through foreign competition, as we are told. This passage appeared in August, 1866.<sup>(97)</sup>

"The monopoly of tin has now ceased, and this monopoly gone, Cornwall is too populous by half. The balance must be reduced either by emigration or starvation. The Cornish people have much en-



durance and much faith in the future. They trust to being able to bear the present pressure, and to recover themselves afterwards, and there is therefore no cry for public aid from them. But I have no hope for their future. I know that the discovery of untouched deposits of tin in the Dutch East Indies has brought the price of the metal to a standard so low that only a few of the very richest mines can be worked to profit. And the mischief does not end there. Lead and iron are chiefly subsidiary to the tin and copper mining, and can hardly be worked to any serious purpose alone. Copper mining is very hard pressed by the competition of Australia and South America, and, moreover, copper is generally deep, and can be worked only, in West Cornwall at least, when the tin mines assist in the drainage. . .

“It is considered probable *that at least ninety per cent.* of the miners of West Cornwall will be absolutely out of employ next Christmas. The middle and upper classes are involved in irretrievable loss by the general depreciation of property. The landed proprietors do not escape, for, besides that they hold largely in shares, the land is generally very poor, but commands its price chiefly in consequence of the market afforded by the mining population. . . .

“Penzance Workhouse is over full, and sheds are being built to receive in-paupers, chiefly women, or families of which the men are seeking work abroad.”

It was suggested that these unfortunate miners should be taken to Wales and South Yorkshire, where such men were wanted, and might earn 3s. 3d. to 7s. a day. As always happens in such cases, it was stated that the gloomy account I have quoted

was overcharged and scarcely truthful: but other writers affirmed its accuracy in most respects; and said that considerable numbers had already gone away, and that the distress was so severe that you might see girls breaking stones on the highway, willing to do anything rather than go into the work-house.

Nine months later (May, 1867) I find the following paragraph, which seems to strongly support the original statement.

“What effect the long-continued depression of the English tin and copper trade has produced upon the prosperity of Cornwall and the fortunes of its mining population, may be learnt from certain returns prepared (we are told by the *West Briton*) for the Board of Trade as to the emigration of miners. It is estimated that during the last twelve months more than 7,500 men have left Cornwall to share the better fortunes of other mining districts. Redruth and Camborne have lost 1,390; Lelant and St. Just 1,590. . . . So far as the destinations of these unwilling emigrants can be ascertained, it appears that 1,155 have gone to America, 670 to Australia and New Zealand, 450 to California, and 1,090 to Scotland and the iron and coal mines of the north of England.”

Again in November, 1867:—

“The depression of the Cornish mining industry leaves its mark in the registrar’s returns. A large number of the population, finding itself without employment, has either emigrated to more hopeful countries beyond the seas, or migrated to other parts of the kingdom where there is a market for its



labour. As a natural consequence, the *marriages* in the county show a very considerable and steady *decline* from 735 to 633 and 533 in the three last September quarters. In Redruth they have fallen from 162 to 68, in Penzance from 129 to 76, and so on. The birth rate has of course declined, but the mortality has increased."

February 1868 gives us another paragraph.

"The distress in the mining districts of Cornwall is unabated. A relief fund of near £4,000 has been raised. The relief given by various unions in the county during the past month was very large. The Ven. Chancellor Phillpotts suggests that the waste lands should be let in patches to the miners for cultivation. Nothing would, he believes, more tend to mitigate the distress."

We have in these passages, extending from August 1866 to February 1868, sufficient proofs of the reality, the extent, and the permanence of the Cornish destitution: not caused by idleness, improvidence, or unskilfulness, on the part of the miners or of their employers; and not to be provided against by foresight such as is found among labouring men anywhere.

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Another source of misery is the introduction of improved machinery. That the use of machinery is on the whole beneficial to the world, is one of those truisms which it is superfluous to prove except to children: but it is impossible to deny that like other good things it brings with it considerable evils; and of these evils one is the disturbance of hand labour.



Some political economists, ignorant of real life, or imperfectly sympathising with the working classes, say flippantly that the displaced men are at perfect liberty to take up another trade: but those who know things as they are, find that to get a living in a new occupation is to most men very difficult, and to many men past thirty nearly impossible. The evil seems to me a very serious one, and such as to call loudly for beneficent intervention.

I have already said that in the end machinery is beneficial to our race. It sometimes indeed, happens that a machine supersedes well paid labour, and substitutes mere watchers who are ill paid: this is a great deduction from the whole benefit. But at other times a machine supersedes ill paid labour, and then one may rejoice in getting rid of a destitute class. Even in this case however, the process of extinction is painful at the best, and requires us to assist the displaced workpeople.

Here is an example from Louis Reybaud,<sup>(98)</sup> an excellent authority: he is writing about the wool-combers.

“No task however, was worse paid, and the misery of the combers is traditional. Our regretted comrade, M. Villermé, was struck with it, and in his time the poverty had not reached its worst. No machine had threatened the old process, and yet the wages did not exceed 1s. to 1s. 2d. a day, including the cost of tools. This was scarcely £12 a year, which was not enough to live on. The country combers therefore, helped their income with the gains from a little land; the town combers had recourse to public assistance. In town and country destitution was

the badge of the trade. The case was worse on the introduction of machines, imperfect at first but gradually improved. A desperate struggle followed, and the hand combers surrendered only to wages reduced so low as 8d. a day. The revolution was complete but five years ago, and at what a price of suffering may be imagined. Of ten thousand former combers not one now remains. After all there is nothing to regret as to this vegetating life; the trial, sharp as it was, has ended in relief to the manufacture. The wool is better worked, yields more, is delivered more regularly; the regulations of the factory have suppressed the inveterate habits of depredation which infested the home work, and were regarded as a fair compensation for the lowness of wages. A better classification has taken place among the workmen; the greater part have found in other employments, higher and less precarious wages."

Benefit in the end, but reduction of wages and sad misery for a time.

M. Michel Chevalier teaches us the same lesson.<sup>(99)</sup>

"Machinery possesses a great power of social amelioration: it brings with it the well-being of the human race, and with its well-being many conditions necessary to liberty, dignity, progress. But as if it were a universal and inevitable law that good never exists without a mixture of ill, the benefit conferred by machinery is sometimes preceded by suffering, which though transitory is nevertheless cruel. I will explain. Labour is the workmen's inheritance: but like the owner of a capital which can be neither pledged nor exchanged, the labourer without work, unless he has saved from the products of former



labour, finds himself in want and misery. But in some cases the first effect of machinery is to deprive men's arms of work, at least when the introduction of it is sudden and general. Such, we know, is not the common result, and even if it does occur, the displacement is only temporary, because the superseded labourers soon find new employments. The mischief however, though not permanent, may run riot for a time, and be severely felt in the bosom of the working classes. Painful examples have been witnessed, in a neighbouring country, England. France itself is not exempt from them. Some of our provinces have lately had painful experience of them, as the result of the invention of the flax-spinning machine."

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Another cause of misery, extending it may be over a district, a province, or a whole country, is a failure of food. Great Britain, happily, knows nothing of famine: even dearth is strange to her, and especially since the freedom of the corn-trade established by Sir Robert Peel; for although the price of bread is but a little lower than it was formerly, it is far steadier, and therefore more easily paid by the consumer. But I am discussing the topic of poor-laws generally, and not with reference to ourselves alone: and if we are practically ignorant of famines, Ireland has within the present generation been afflicted with one of the worst that has visited modern Europe. What should local or central governments do for the relief of such destitution? Let us see what was done by one of the greatest economists and administrators of the last century.



Turgot had been offered the *intendance* of Lyons, but had chosen to remain at the head of the poor and melancholy *généralité* of Limoges, and in 1770, nine years afterwards, the province was desolated by famine. Frenchman and Economist as he was, he did not apply to the case the maxim of his school, *laissez faire, laissez passer*.<sup>(100)</sup>

“With that fixity of principles which characterized him, Turgot saw that at this difficult juncture, he had three necessary duties to perform: to maintain the freedom of the corn-trade, become a law of the State by the edict of 1764: to secure to the poor such employment as would enable them to buy food; and to compel selfish people to acknowledge the moral law obliging them to mitigate their neighbours’ sufferings. The official history of his energy and activity in all these respects, is found in the documents we have enumerated.”

The practice of a free corn-trade between one province of France and another, though legalized by the edict of 1764 already mentioned, had not yet been adopted into the popular code of rights; and the people of the Orléanais would have thought it wrong that their corn should be carried away by proprietors or dealers, to feed the starving inhabitants of Touraine or Anjou. As soon as the price began to rise, corn which was being transported to other places was forcibly stopped; and in vain was it pointed out that the higher price elsewhere showed the corn to be more wanted in that dearer market. Owners and dealers were insulted, were required to sell at home at a price named, were ruined and threatened with death: and as an inevitable conse-

quence, the grain was not sent to market but disposed of secretly. The Bordeaux Parliament had formally forbidden owners of grain to sell it anywhere but at market; and had required them to keep the market well supplied weekly. Turgot got these orders annulled.

The severest economists will approve of this part of his conduct: but what will they say to another part? <sup>(101)</sup>

“As first magistrate of the province, he established a system of charity; as a citizen, he set an example; and after having exhausted all the resources at his disposal, he borrowed £800 to distribute among those under his charge.

“Stirred up by him, meetings and committees of charity were formed on every side. So early as the close of 1769 he had got pecuniary help from the government, and with this he had set on foot public works, and had procured food for the population. . . .

“However, selfishness, deaf to the call of charity, left these resources insufficient. Turgot did not hesitate to use coercion, and published two ordinances, one of which required proprietors to provide for their dependents, and the other enjoining on every parish the duty of maintaining its poor until the next harvest.”

We see that in Turgot's opinion, the prevalence of famine required both private and public intervention.

Nor did Turgot act thus with undue haste and in such a way as afterwards to be repented of. Several years later, <sup>(102)</sup> he wrote a memorandum on the best way of dealing with Paris under a temporary rise of

prices. He declared his opinion that the only safe way of giving assistance was to find work for the unemployed, and materials for those who were too poor to buy them. Men, he said, might manage to live, but women and children required especial attention.

In the case of dearth as well as in that of famine, Turgot would render judicious assistance. It is not to such cases that he would apply *laissez faire*, the motto of his school.

Besides famine, there are other misfortunes against which ordinary prudence cannot guard. A French pamphlet of 1868, deals with the subject. An article in the *Journal des Économistes* gives an epitome of the argument.

M. Cottin,<sup>(103)</sup> the author, reminds us that the Loire often overflows its banks, and that such a misfortune is not confined to the neighbourhood of one river: that there are other scourges, such as great fires and epidemics; he might have added revolutions *and wars*. The people who have thus become a prey to the violence of the elements or of their fellow men, need immediate assistance: food, shelter, employment. Those who have escaped from the flood or the fire want help that very day. But, says M. Cottin, there is no previous organization; and the unfortunates are left to shift for themselves, until their cries are at length heard, and the government, all too late, comes to their aid.

What is wanted is an organization: we are asked what would become of an army which went to war without surgeons and ambulances; and for which no medical provision was thought of till after a battle?

M. Cottin proposes a *Caisse des fléaux*, a provision



against catastrophes; the funds to be provided by an offertory through the care of the clergy, by voluntary subscriptions, and a small share of the communal funds. This mode of raising the money, was just that of Scotland before its new poor-law: the application proposed however, being not as in Scotland to relief generally, but to relief of occasional misfortune.

In Scotland for some years, and in England for centuries, the much abused poor-law has supplied the immediate relief required, and on great occasions has found the necessary addition in the liberality of the public, or occasionally (as during the Irish famine) in a parliamentary grant. The instantaneous intervention called for by M. Cottin is thus supplied by our organization.

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It seems then that destitution constantly exists: that there are always the sick, the lunatics, the idiots, the widows and the fatherless: that there are sometimes labourers thrown out of employment by unusual frosts of weeks or months: that in towns the fluctuations of manufactures reduce thousands to temporary want: that miners may lose their employment as in the late case of the decent Cornishmen: that the introduction of improved machinery, while benefiting the world drives whole classes to despair, as in the cases of the wool-combers mentioned by M. Louis Reybaud, and of the flax-spinners mentioned by M. Michel Chevalier: that dearths, though almost unknown in England, are common in other countries, and that famine of the severest degree is possible, as

we have seen in Ireland: that inundations, fires, epidemics, revolutions, wars, still desolate the world, and require the promptest possible aid.

Can men be found audacious enough to say that all the victims of these catastrophes ought to be left to their fate? And why? As a warning to others? Sickness, you will say, is the liability of all; a working man should provide against it by entering a club: suppose he does so; the allowance he gets is a bare subsistence; if he has a long illness he must become impoverished. At last he dies, leaving may-be a number of young children; and a widow in many cases really unable to maintain them, though with a little assistance till the elder ones begin to earn wages, she may bring up the family with decency. If you refuse that assistance, the children are driven into rags, squalor and beggary.

You will perhaps concede the necessity of hospitals, and of asylums for idiots, for lunatics, and for deaf and dumb. But you will say that labourers, knowing the uncertainty of the seasons, ought to provide against occasional frosts of unusual duration: that artisans ought to profit by their own experience or the lessons of their fathers, and lay up during prosperity a provision for times of depression: you add that if they fail to do so, they must be left to their fate, as a warning to others. How then, will you deal with the Cornish miners, ruined by the competition of foreign ore? Were they bound to argue philosophically that human happiness is transient, that every man is liable to be cast into penury by external causes; and ought they to have abstained from marrying until they had saved enough to

support themselves and a family for months of expectation, and finally to enable them to emigrate? I say it is utopian to require the general adoption of such prudence. The mechanics ruined by new machinery, come under the same category: it is madness to expect from poor, ill-paid persons, a self-restraint which is exceptional even among such professional men as clergymen, physicians, or solicitors.

What do you say to dearths, commonly repeated in some countries; to famines, not unknown in most countries? You dared not have left the Irish to perish from the land; to have been reduced by millions besides those who actually died of inanition or pestilence, notwithstanding the liberal aid rendered.

Would you really leave the peasants on the Loire unassisted, lest you should encourage foolish people to get their living by cultivating the banks of the river? Would you require a desert to be made of all the farms within reach of inundation? If you wrote on the spot instead of in your study, you would rather agree with M. Cottin, that permanent provision should be made for immediate assistance when the misfortune arises.

I have already shown by the cases of Scotland and Ireland, that where there is a very meagre poor-law or none at all, there may be severe and wide spread destitution; and that in fact the condition of Ireland was far worse than that of Scotland, and the condition of both far worse than that of England, notwithstanding the continued exhibition in Ireland, and to a less degree in Scotland, of the natural punish-



ment attending improvidence; and notwithstanding the alleged weakness of the English in disturbing the course of nature by systematically helping the distressed.

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One great principle is evolved out of these inquiries: that it is a fatal error to allow people to fall into hopeless want. I have already quoted the opinion of the Scotch Commissioners, that "under the influence of long-continued privations men lose self-respect, and become desponding and reckless. But this mood of mind is likely to prolong those privations, and is ill-suited for steady industry, thrift, and foresight."

M. Le Play, in his *Ouvriers Européens* advances the same opinion, formed from observation. In an account of a French family of weavers, he says:<sup>(104)</sup>

"The family supports bravely the laborious and severe life described in this monograph: it contrives to improve it a little when the children become old enough to work; but too often, want of employment or sickness drives into misery. If a family so stricken is not immediately aided by private or public beneficence, it falls into discouragement: the husband takes to drinking and becomes idle even when employment is offered; the wife neglects to keep the house and the clothes clean; the family yielding to the burden of suffering, sinks into a permanent condition of wretchedness and degradation: unable to maintain itself by labour, it becomes henceforth a charge on the community. Setting aside all considerations of humanity, we may say that institutions

to secure workmen a certain minimum of well-being, would be a good speculation for the neighbourhood."

Ireland, Scotland, France, all teach us the same lesson : give help, speedy, sufficient, judicious. There is a French proverb, *aide toi et le ciel t'aidera* : I will offer an English apothegm as an accompaniment ; *help the poor and they will help themselves*.

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The main theoretical argument against poor-laws, is that they tend to relax the sinews of poor men's resolves ; and by training people to lean on the union, encourage a weak and dependent habit of mind. Against this I have set what I have called a great principle, or fundamental law : I have given the authority of men who have studied facts existing in different countries, and who have declared that to leave men unaided when they are destitute, is certain to result in further destitution, in hopelessness, recklessness, drunkenness, idleness, beggary, and crime.

Which of these opinions is the correct one ? In Section IV, I have tried to decide the question by induction from facts : I have produced in court, England and Scotland and Ireland : I have given the substance of the depositions obtained by commissioners appointed for the purpose : I have quoted the evidence, guided by which the British Legislature determined to introduce a poor-law into Ireland, and to greatly enlarge the previous poor-law of Scotland.

I will now offer a further piece of evidence, and one which seems to me strongly confirmatory of my argument.

England is the land of poor-laws : England ought

to be the land of improvidence. English labourers have been crutched up with the certainty of parish relief: English labourers ought, above all other labourers, to have spent their wages without thought of the morrow. English hinds and artisans are always sure that whatever may happen they are safe from starvation: English hinds and artisans ought, far beyond those of other countries, to spend their earnings and to trust the authorities for maintenance in sickness and impotence. Now let us look at the facts.

It will not be pretended that labouring men generally can be expected to live single, until their earnings are such as to secure them against want for life, in case of loss of limb or in case of chronic sickness. As all are liable to such fearful misfortunes, and as in fact comparatively few meet with them, the obvious remedy is insurance, by which all get a sense of security, and by which those who escape contribute each a small sum to their suffering brethren. On this principle are founded sick-clubs, benefit-societies, burial-clubs.

Now where do these provident institutions most prevail? In countries with poor-laws or in countries without poor-laws? In Ireland, there was no legal provision for relief: were provident institutions universal there? In Scotland there was some legal relief: were such institutions less common than in Ireland? In England there has been a legal provision for centuries: are sick-clubs, benefit-societies, burial-clubs unknown?

I reply that England, the land of poor-laws is pre-eminently the land of benefit societies. In 1870,



there were in England and Wales, three million members. This gives about two members to every three families, or one member to every two men over twenty-one years old. The numbers in other countries are comparatively small.

The great extension of this practice of insuring against sickness, is explained by the length of the period during which it has been in vogue. Hutton in his *Courts of Requests*, rather complains of the number of cases arising from club disputes, brought into the Birmingham court. Here is an example without any date, but which must probably belong to a year between 1770 and 1780.<sup>(105)</sup>

“T. had long been member of a sick club; had long hung upon the box, and though a young man, seemed inclinable to hang for life. The club, considering him as an impostor, and frightened at his being entailed on them for ever, with-held the pay.

“*Not a court-day passes without some club cases coming before the Bench*; all consist of those who are willing to receive, but unwilling to pay; among others came the humble T. with his shewy lady. The Commissioners, from the appearance of his face, which is an index that points to the state of the body, as well as the mind, and from a certificate written by a gentleman of the faculty, made an order in his favour.

“Elated with this success, madam bullied the members, who in turn were determined to be rid of T. and endeavoured to omit receiving his weekly contribution to the club, that by six weeks omission, he might forfeit his right to membership; but the Court would not allow of any finesse.

"T. or rather his wife, frequently brought the stewards to the Court. The Commissioners particularly enquired into his complaint. She was the speaker, he was composed of humility, and never opened his mouth but by her order. No material defect was exhibited, and madam seemed rather to lose ground. The cause was continued for proof. Every means was tried in the interim to induce the Bench to give judgment in her favour. The Overseers stepped forward. Some of the faculty used their interest, which, as it was granting a favour to him, might be paid for by her. She even applied individually to the Commissioners, and stated that she had *only* sixteen shillings a week coming in, seven from the club, five from the parish, and four from another quarter; that she could not subsist upon it; that she expected to be aided in acquiring more, rather than be deprived of this."

Sixteen shillings a week, when farm labourers earned six shillings a week! Notwithstanding the disgraceful private solicitation, this was the conclusion.

"*Court.* 'We have given the case great attention. We have tried it by our own judgment, and by your laws. There is no reason why men, who can barely support themselves, should support others equally able. We shall dismiss the case.' The wife discharged upon the Commissioners thunder and lightning from her tongue and eyes. The man however, who was merely suffering from a slight rupture, no impediment to work, threw away his flannels and turned his hand to his trade." As to his pallor, says old Hutton, that was natural in the case of any man possessed of a rampant wife.

In another cause, the stewards pleaded for non-payment on the ground that the plaintiff "had lost his sight, by being intoxicated with liquor, while dependant upon the box:" after hearing evidence on both sides, the Commissioners ordered them to pay: the club then elected fresh stewards who resided out of the jurisdiction, and laughed at the court for a few weeks, when the poor man died.

Such were the cases constantly before this little Court: and it comes out in this shrewd and amusing book that there existed in Birmingham clubs of all kinds.<sup>(106)</sup> There were *two-guinea* clubs, in which every member paid his shilling a week, and received his two guineas when he drew a favourable number in a ballot: there were also building-clubs, £50-clubs, rent-clubs, clock-clubs, watch-clubs, breeches-clubs. "We abound<sup>(107)</sup> in clubs of the feminine gender; some composed of young girls, some of wives, or widows, and some a mixture of all. A mantua-maker, to introduce business, will establish a *gown-club*. The members subscribe weekly, and ballot for their chance. A *stays-club* is brought forward by the stay-maker, but both he, and the mantua-maker, are fortunate if they recover payment. A woman may be rigged from head to foot, by a female club, provided the expence shall not exceed a certain amount."

We see incidentally, that there was no want of liberality in Birmingham on the part of the overseers: we see also that clubs were very numerous, and we are told that the greater part were sick-clubs.<sup>(108)</sup>

Nor were these societies peculiar to towns. Eden<sup>(109)</sup> in 1797, in his great work on the Poor, a little after



Hutton's time, says that "Benefit Clubs or Friendly Societies" had made great progress in the country, and that there was not a district devoid of them.

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The wide diffusion of these clubs can only be explained by the antiquity of the practice of forming them. Arthur Young, quoting from Cullum's *Hansted* (page 20), said that parochial guilds were of very great antiquity. Eden<sup>(110)</sup> also, tells us of the *Saxon Guilds*, referring to *Hickes's Thesaurus* as his authority. But he says of them in another page, that being commonly attached to religious bodies, they were checked by Henry the Eighth's confiscations.

There is a coincidence however, which is remarkable. Our poor-laws, after many experiments, culminated in the Statute of the 43rd Elizabeth, at the very beginning of the seventeenth century. In those days there was no Central Board to insist on the immediate adoption of the new law in every parish: and even if there had been such a coercing body, the new system would not have affected the habits of the people at once. It must therefore have been during the seventeenth century, if at all, that our working classes were extensively corrupted by systematised legal relief. Let those who believe that such corruption must have followed the new law, ponder the following extract: let them reconcile if they can, the legal training in improvidence and the simultaneous prudence which appears to have been exerted. It is the late Registrar of Friendly Societies who speaks, and speaks with great authority. The date of the report is about fifteen years ago.

“The<sup>(111)</sup> first societies *in point of time*, and those which at present exist in the greatest numbers, are the *ordinary benefit clubs*; but very recently a number of societies have formed themselves into what the members of them call ‘an order,’ or secret society, to which only the initiated are admissible. . . . It appears that friendly societies, as at present constituted, *did not exist in any number* in England before the *seventeenth century*.”

The old Saxon Guilds then, disappeared after the Reformation: it may be that the habit of combining for mutual assistance, made it easy to introduce other forms of association: in the mean time, the poor-laws were introduced, and ought, as we are told, to have destroyed the spirit of prudence and self-reliance: yet if we may trust Mr. Registrar Tidd Pratt, the new societies came into being at this very time. Poor-laws and benefit-societies grew side by side. Does not this confirm the apothegm:—help the poor, and they will help themselves?

My argument during the last few pages, has been mostly grounded on the fact that benefit-societies have flourished more in England, the land of long continued poor-laws, than in other countries where poor-laws are little known. I have stated how large is the number of benefit-societies in England: I have not stated how small it is in other countries; nor can I do more than appeal to the general consent among writers on such subjects, that benefit-societies are comparatively rare in Scotland, in Ireland, and on the Continent.

I can however, go one step farther: I can show that South Wales, which like England is permeated

with a poor-law, was also in 1856, remarkable for the prudence exhibited in anticipating misfortune.<sup>(112)</sup>

*"Sick Clubs and Benefit Societies.*—Sick Clubs are universal in South Wales. There is hardly a working man or any miner who does not eagerly seek that mode of providing for a time of sickness. Such clubs are supported equally by the men and the masters, and are the means of preventing any undue burden upon the poor-rate."

Help the poor, and they will help themselves.

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The practice of legal relief, has been set in a different point of view in one of the volumes of the Registrar General: it is spoken of as a system of insurance against sickness and want. All men are within the possibility of absolute want: the last representative of the Plantagenets may die in a workhouse. All householders are liable to pay the poor-rate: many of them, either themselves or in the persons of their children or grandchildren receive assistance: some who pay get nothing beyond the sense of security produced by the certainty that they and their children will be protected from absolute want. But in all insurances there is the same distinction: for if I, with a good constitution, escape accidents, I pay before I die much more than my family will get at my death; whereas you, with a feebler constitution, pay less than your family will get. I pay for you, which I should not do if I had the gift of foresight. I get for myself the sense of security as to my children's provision: you get this



too, and your children get a larger provision than they would have had.

I have said nothing of what induces many persons to insure their lives : the conviction that in no other way will they save part of their income, but that having once effected an insurance, they will be tolerably certain to pay the annual premium. Now by means of the poor-law, the government says to all classes : it is essential to your happiness that you should insure, not only against the poverty which may come upon your family at your death, but also against the fatal consequences which may follow the loss of your health, or the cessation of your employment, or visitations by fire, inundation, pestilence : we require you to pay us a small annual sum, and we will in return protect you from the extreme consequences of such misfortunes.

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An important element in our poor-law is the law of settlement. I have already quoted Adam Smith's opinion that this law impeded the due circulation of labourers. This may have been so in his time : since we find so industrious and prudent a man as Hutton, the local historian, narrowly escaping from being turned out of Birmingham, when as a young and struggling man he set up as a working bookbinder. But in the Tudor days, that hindrance to circulation was a great benefit, since, as we find in the introduction to More's *Utopia*, England was overrun with able-bodied vagabonds turned loose by the extinction of barons' retainers, by the close of the Wars of the

Roses, by the increase of inclosures for sheep herding and consequent diminution of tillage and of demand for farm labourers.

The laws of settlement have since Adam Smith's time been greatly modified: overseers and guardians cannot now visit a poor man's house, and send him away lest he should hereafter become chargeable: any man can go and work where he will, and by an industrial residence of a year he obtains what is virtually a new settlement. I believe however, that some law of settlement is absolutely necessary: since without it a parsimonious and harsh union would drive away its paupers, who would flock to the neighbouring union of more liberal practices.

In Ireland, the practice of settlements is found very important. I have already said (at p. 136) how strongly that law is acting in the prevention of thoughtless migration.

Sir George Nicholls tells us how before the enactment of a poor-law, the absence of claims under settlement led to frightful consequences.<sup>(113)</sup>

"The remedy or change in management here adverted to was the consolidation of farms, which it is said would lead to better husbandry, to a greater certainty of crop, to the providing farm-buildings and more comfortable habitations, and to an increase in the quantity and improvement in the quality of the produce. These are all important considerations, and if the landlords and the tenants who continued in possession were alone to be regarded, the change would appear an unmixed good. But there is another class, the ejected tenants, whose condition, it is said, necessarily becomes most deplorable. 'It would be

impossible for language to convey an idea of the state of distress to which the ejected tenantry have been reduced, or of the disease, misery, and even vice, which they have propagated in the towns wherein they have settled; so not only they who have been ejected have been rendered miserable, but they have carried with them and propagated that misery.'"

A law of settlement would have given to the ejected a claim for relief in the parish or district where their farm was: this might have prevented the landlord from consolidating his farms without also providing other means of living for the ejected tenants: if not, these would have been maintained in some fashion by the workhouse. Mr. Senior tells us how the new poor-law works: apparently it does not always make the landlord provide for those he turns out. The agent of an estate gave him the following information.<sup>(114)</sup>

"The great instrument which is clearing Ireland is the Poor Law. It supplies both the motive and the means. The pauper no longer sends his wife and children to beg over the country while he is seeking work in England. He absconds, and throws them on the rates. The landlord finds that an over-peopled estate is a burden, not to society at large, but to himself individually. He reconciles himself to the apparent harshness of eviction by sending notice to the relieving-officer, and having taken the precaution pointed out to him by the law, clears his estate, and holds the law responsible for the consequences."

Before there was a poor-law, the evicted tenants sank into the lowest misery and vice: since there



has been a poor-law, the evicted tenants emigrate, leaving their families a charge to the parish till they can send for them to their adopted country.

It was maintained by those who opposed the introduction of a poor-law, that the peasants would be kept at home in a state of destitution mitigated by legal relief.<sup>(115)</sup>

“Ireland affords another of the instances in which legislation for the relief of the poor has produced effects precisely opposite to those which it was intended” (expected) “to effect. The Poor Law was passed in order to keep the Irish paupers at home; it has expatriated them by thousands. It was passed for the purpose of relieving England and Scotland at the expense of Ireland; it will probably relieve Ireland at the expense of England and Scotland.”

Some persons are all for centralization in this matter: they would have a general fund for the whole kingdom, so that a destitute person should get permanent relief wherever he chanced to be. We see clearly what would be the result in Ireland: that the gentry, set free from the fear of increasing their own rates, would cease to fulfil what Mr. Senior calls one of the chief functions of landlordism, the checking of unnecessary population.

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Besides the reasons I have already assigned in direct defence of poor-laws, there are others which have more of a political character. It is dangerous to the peace of society to have crowds of persons herding together in outhouses and cellars, or sleeping

among limekilns; half clothed, fed on scraps and pickings, famished to-day, drunk to-morrow.

I have quoted on a previous page, an account of a feast of the association of beggars in Paris in the year 1786; at which feast 200 guests were present, and after a sumptuous dinner closed the doors that they might discuss the affairs of their craft. M. Peuchet, from whom my authority derives his information, also relates what measures were taken about the same time to root out this infamous confraternity.<sup>(116)</sup>

“He informs us that in France, there were, in the years anterior to 1789, a considerable number of mendicants condemned to be broken on the wheel, ‘pour raison d’attaques, incendies, vols, et assassinats.’ This crushing rigour seems to have been as general as it was terrible — ‘Leurs bandes furent ainsi détruites’: horrible as the punishment was, it was clearly necessary that some strong measures should be resorted to; for it appears from the documents connected with their trials, that those beggars were neither more nor less than brigands formally united together for the commission of crime, and that their associations extended through whole provinces. Till this heavy judgment fell upon them they lived, as regular beggars in all countries think themselves entitled to, luxuriously. They were a rich fraternity. The foolish among them were hoarders, the wise usurers.”

Now mendicity cannot be put down, without a legal provision of relief for the needy. Few persons are so hard-hearted as to leave to starvation, men or women or children: but where a poor-law is well administered, refusal of indiscriminate private alms does not mean starvation.

It is easy to say that the strong measures I have quoted broke up the bands of the mendicant criminals : if so, whence came those foul and ferocious beings who issued from darkness to disport themselves in the light of the revolution ; followers of Marat the Murderer ; who enjoyed for a brief space the dear delight of killing, killing the envied possessors of affluence, innocence, and refinement.<sup>(117)</sup>

“ Whenever, for the purposes of government, we arrive, in any state of society, at a class so miserable as to be in want of the common necessities of life, a new principle comes into action. The usual restraints which are sufficient for the well fed, are often useless in checking the demands of hungry stomachs. Other and more powerful means must then be employed ; a larger array of military or police force must be maintained. Under such circumstances, it may be considerably cheaper to fill empty stomachs to the point of ready obedience, than to compel starving wretches to respect the roast beef of their more industrious neighbours : and it may be expedient, in a mere economical point of view, to supply gratuitously the wants even of able-bodied persons, if it can be done without creating crowds of additional applicants.”

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In this section then, I have brought forward facts and arguments directly in favour of legal relief of the destitute.

I have given examples of misery in Paris and London, and I have asked whether those who relieved these necessities were wrong in their work of charity :



I have quoted from M. Dupin that singular illustration of Athenian opinion, that a citizen devoid of pity for the distressed, was unworthy to live. I have given examples of habitual beggary in different places, as Ireland, Scotland, Paris ; and I have asked how the ruinous calling of mendicancy could be got rid of, without a system of legal relief. I have conceded that such a system tends to lessen private charity in the form of indiscriminate almsgiving ; and I have claimed that diminution as an advantage, because, as I maintain, the officers of the poor-law administration are less liable to be imposed upon than private persons ; I hold that while poor persons well known to us may be advantageously helped, strangers are best left to mendicity societies and unions : I look upon the poor of the middle class as the fittest objects of private beneficence.

I have shown what large numbers of the labouring classes are really in want of assistance : the sick, the lunatics, the idiots, the labourers thrown out of work by unusual frosts ; the artisans deprived of employment and wages by changes of fashion or fluctuations of demand ; the miners who, as lately in Cornwall, had their occupation taken from them by foreign competition ; the families robbed of their trade by the introduction of machinery, as for example, the wool-combers and flax-spinners of France.

I have pointed out how Turgot, the *Économiste*, recognized the unquestionable right of the famine-stricken to the contributions of the affluent : and this, not only in 1770-1, but years later when he had had time to reconsider his opinions : I have quoted a recent appeal by M. Cottin, a government employé,

in behalf of a provision for the sufferers by inundations: I have mentioned the need of aid for others ruined by fires, epidemics, revolutions, and wars.

From all these cases constantly recurring, I have concluded that a steady, uniform system of relief is wanted; such as no private charity can possibly provide. If while you are bent on putting down street begging, and the impostures of trading mendicants, you shrink from leaving any to die of cold and hunger, then provide ample but judicious legal assistance.

I have shown how the principle that men should absolutely take care of themselves and their families, carried into practice, results in despondency, drunkenness, and degradation: how on the contrary, sympathy and judicious assistance encourage and strengthen the poor. I have given examples illustrating this opinion, and I conclude that the true maxim is, help the poor and they will help themselves.

To the principle of isolation, I have applied a test which seems a reasonable one:—England is the land of poor-laws; it ought to be the land of improvidence. Now the existence of sick-clubs and benefit-societies, is as far as it goes an obvious and available test of prudence and foresight: where these associations are numerous and permanent, the people cannot be thoughtless and reckless. But in England, the land of poor-laws, these associations are very numerous, are steadily supported, and have long flourished. It is remarkable too, that in their present form they came into existence with the poor-laws, and have grown side by side with them. In Scotland with its meagre poor-law these associa-

tions were comparatively rare : in Ireland while there was no poor-law, they were almost unheard of. Does not this comparison confirm the maxim, that if you help the poor they will help themselves ?

I have pointed out how important the law of settlement has been found in Ireland, by giving a direct and powerful interest to landowners to keep down an unnecessary population : I have before shown that in England we cannot dispense with it, unless we can submit to having paupers rushing into those parishes where liberal relief is given, and deserting the shabby and penurious parishes which would thus profit by their own delinquencies.

I have ended by remarking on the political importance of avoiding the aggregation of unfed, unhoused wretches, setting little value on life, bent on sensual gratification at whatever risk, ready tools of insurrectionists, prompt to robbery, assault, incendiarism, assassination.

## VI.

IT may seem to some persons that I have taken great pains in proving what requires no proof : that the necessity of regular, permanent, legal relief is obvious. Perhaps it would not have been lately disputed but for the influence of Malthus, who for a particular purpose having struck out a new principle and dilated upon it, did what all discoverers and inventors do by carrying their principles beyond their just limits.

But I have shown that however obvious is the necessity of poor-laws, Malthus's denunciations of



them were anticipated by Arthur Young and others, and were accepted as just by a man of such eminence as Ricardo: and that Chalmers long afterwards, and the writers of the *Dictionnaire* recently, adopted them without hesitation or restriction. I have found too, in my own experience, that cultivated men who have read political economy, generally range themselves on the side of the opinion, that poor-laws may be tolerated at the most, but cannot be regarded as good in themselves: and that therefore, though we may submit to them because they are ingrained in our habits, we may envy the good fortune of those nations who have never introduced them.

How did this condemnation of legal relief arise? in the case of Hume and of Arthur Young, for example, who both anticipated Malthus?

In the last century, Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, and the other encyclopedists, not content with disbelieving Christianity, banded themselves together to destroy it. English unbelievers, Hume and Gibbon and others, mildly ridiculed Christianity, but showed no desire to overturn it. The Frenchmen worked themselves up to scornful hatred, and shouted with Voltaire, *écrasez l'infâme*; down with the beast: the Englishmen were content to point their sarcasms and print them peacefully. The explanation of the difference is easy. In Great Britain the Church was tolerant; in France it was persecuting: in Great Britain it was rational; in France it was superstitious. It was the gross abuses of the French Church which maddened its opponents.

In a less degree it was the same with our poor-laws. It was not the laws themselves but their abuse

which excited men's indignation. I have already quoted Mr. Ruggles:<sup>(118)</sup> "Why do we throw the blame from where it ought to fall, and charge the laws themselves with the consequences flowing from a breach of them? They form in general, a code replete with humanity."

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What then, were the abuses at that time and afterwards?

First, let us see how our poor-laws came into existence: Nicholls gives us a careful history of them.

It is often assumed that the 43rd Elizabeth was framed without any previous experiments; but this was far from being the case. Statutes against vagrancy are found early in our history: there was one in the time of Richard II, another in the time of Henry VII; and under the other Tudors still more attention was given to correcting the evil.<sup>(119)</sup> For example, there was a carefully framed Act, 22nd Henry VIII, cap. 12, "concerning the punishment of beggars and vagabonds." The preamble states that,<sup>(120)</sup>

"In all places throughout this realm, vagabonds and beggars have of long time increased, and daily do increase in great and excessive numbers, by the occasion of *idleness, mother and root of all vices*, whereby hath insurged and sprung, and daily insurgeth and springeth, continual thefts, murders, and other heinous offences and great enormities, to the high displeasure of God, the unquietation and damage of the king's people, and the marvellous disturbance of the common weal."

It was enacted that justices of the peace and other authorities, "shall make diligent search of all aged poor and impotent persons which live by alms and charity; . . . and may enable such of the said impotent persons as they may think convenient to beg and live of the charity and alms of the people within a limit to them to be appointed."

The authorities were also required to give to every such legalized beggar, a letter containing name, licence, and assigned boundaries. We are again reminded of Edie Ochiltree and the Scotch bedesmen.

But "if any person or persons being whole and mighty in body, and able to labour, be found begging, or if any man or woman, being whole and mighty in body, and able to labour, having no land master, nor using any lawful merchandise, craft, or myserie, be vagrants, and can give no reckoning how he doth lawfully get his living," the constables and others are to arrest such idle persons and bring them before the justices of the peace, "who at their discretion shall cause every such idle person to be had to the next market-town, or other place most convenient, and be there tied to the end of a cart naked, and be beaten with whips throughout the same town or other place, till his body be reason of such whipping."

Caught again, "he is eftsoons to be taken and again whipped, and so, as often as any default shall be found in him contrary to the order of this statute, he is in every place to be taken and whipped, till he be repaired to where he was born, or last dwelt for three years, and there labour for his living, without begging, as long as he is able to do so."

But suppose a youth brought up to a wandering



life, where was he to be whipped to? Or still worse, suppose a vagrant returned to his *place of settlement*, fixed by three years' residence, and found no work to be had, was he to lie down and die? The legislature was on its way to providing *workhouses*. Five years after the above Act was passed,<sup>(121)</sup> there came the 27th Henry VIII, cap. 25, in which it was ordered that "the mayors, bailiffs, constables, and other head officers of cities, towns, and parishes, shall *most charitably receive* such poor creatures or sturdy vagabonds as are specified in the said Act, and shall succour, relieve, and keep the said poor people by way of voluntary charitable alms, in such wise as none of them shall of necessity be compelled to wander and go openly in begging; and also shall cause the said sturdy vagabonds and valiant beggars to be *set and kept to continual labour* in such wise as they may get their own living with the continual labour of their own hands."

It appears that vagabonds continued to oppress the country: Nicholls gives the following passage from a book of 1566.<sup>(122)</sup>

"The author classes the male vagabonds under fifteen separate designations, beginning with 'the Rufflar' as being 'the worthiest of this unruly rabblement.' The 'Upright Man' is the 'second in sect of these rainging rabblement of rascals.' The third is the 'Hooker or Angler,' described as a 'perilous and most wicked knave.' The 'Rogue' and the 'Wild Rogue' are the fourth and fifth; after which come 'the Freshwater Mariners,' whose 'ships were drowned in the plain of Salisbury;' and so on to the 'Counterfeit Crank,' of whom it is said,

‘These that do counterfeit the crank be young knaves and young harlots that deeply dissemble the falling sickness, for the *crank* in their language, is the *falling evil*.’ A long account is given of this description of impostors, after whom come the ‘Dommerar,’ and lastly the ‘Jackman and Patricio.’ The female vagabonds are classed under nine separate designations. But all, both men and women, old and young, are described as thieves by profession, and as living in a most dissolute and licentious manner. They have a slang language of their own of which the writer gives a curious specimen in a dialogue between two of them; and he further gives a long list of the ‘most notorious and wickedest walkers that are living now at this present time, with their true names as they be called and known by.’”

Victor Hugo, in his *Notre Dame*, makes us acquainted with the Truands of Louis the Eleventh’s time: the passage quoted above tells us of the beggars of Queen Elizabeth’s time: Sir Walter Scott, in his *Fortunes of Nigel*, sketches for us the Alsatia of Whitefriars; to which I may add the full account of rogues and beggars in *Shakespeare’s England* by Mr. Thornbury. The Act of the 18th of Elizabeth seems to have been much wanted.

“To the intent youth may be accustomed and brought up in labour and work, and then not grow to be idle rogues; and to the intent also that such as be already grown up in idleness, and so are rogues at present, may not have any just excuse in saying that they cannot get any service or work, and be then, *without favour or toleration, worthy to be executed*, . . . the justices of peace may in

general sessions appoint and order a competent stock of wool, hemp, flax, iron, or other stuff, shall be provided *by taxation* of all the inhabitants within the several limits."

The persons appointed to manage this difficult business are to be called "the collectors and governors of the poor."

It was also enacted that there shall be houses of correction, where tools and materials shall be provided for setting the arrested vagabonds to work.

We are getting very near to workhouses, overseers, poor-rates, and laws of settlement.

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Passing over other statutes, let us come to the well-known 43rd Elizabeth, which crowned the edifice gradually built up during the previous centuries. We have seen <sup>(123)</sup> that the earlier efforts were directed to putting down "valiant beggars and sturdy vagabonds," and that the severest punishments were denounced against the refractory: that milder measures were gradually introduced to prevent mendicancy as well as to punish it. The 43rd Elizabeth confirmed these humane remedies. Though the statute is well known, I will quote its main provisions.

It provides that in every parish, "four, three, or two substantial householders shall, under the hand and seal of two or more justices of the peace, be yearly nominated in Easter-Week, and that these, with the churchwardens, shall be *overseers* of the poor." These officers are to raise "weekly or otherwise, by taxation of every inhabitant, parson, vicar, and other, and of every occupier of lands, houses,



tithes impropriate, or proprietors of tithes, coal-mines, and saleable underwoods, in the said parish, such competent sum and sums of money as they shall think fit, for the following purposes:—”

*First.* “For setting to work the children of all such whose parents shall not be thought able to keep and maintain them.”

*Secondly.* “For setting to work all such persons, married and unmarried, having no means to maintain them, and who use no ordinary and daily trade of life to get their living by.”

*Thirdly.* “For providing a convenient stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron, and other ware and stuff, to set the poor on work.”

*Fourthly.* “For the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind, and such other among them being poor, and not able to work.”

One cannot help remarking how socialistic the three first of these proposals are. The socialists maintain that every one has a right to employment and wages: they call upon the government to organize labour and to provide means for it. They propose indeed to supersede private capitalists, and to put government in their place: whereas the overseers were intended only to supplement private employers, and by no means to do away with them. If however, government once undertook to establish trades and manufactures on a large scale, private capitalists would have a poor chance of holding their own.

The overseers are directed by a previous statute (39th Elizabeth, cap. 3) “to meet together at least once in every month, in the parish church, after

divine service on the Sunday, to consider of some good course to be taken, and of some meet order to be set down, in the premises." They are required at the end of this year of service, to render an account of their receipts and disbursements.

Rates in aid were also established. Any parish unable to raise the needful monies, might call for assistance upon other parishes within the hundred: if the hundred could not raise such rates, the county might be called upon.

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I will pass on a century, during which the poor-law system struck its roots deep into our social system. In 1714<sup>(124)</sup> the rates collected are supposed to have been nearly a million: a vast sum, as we shall confess when we recollect that the population was about a fourth of what it is now, and that the incomes of the people were so much less than they are now, that during the War of the Succession just concluded it had been found difficult to raise a *twelfth* part of the general taxes we now pay. We should grumble loudly if our present poor-rates were 12 millions £ a year.

This oppressive amount went on increasing, <sup>(125)</sup> and is estimated to have reached a million and a quarter in 1760, though I must confess some hesitation in believing it to have been so much, when I take into consideration the well known fact that during these first sixty years of the century, a series of good harvests had kept the price of wheat unusually low, and the condition of the labourers proportionally good.

At any rate, the poor-laws were much discussed, and various schemes of amendment were proposed: "the chief of them being that by Mr. Hay in 1735, that by Mr. Alcock in 1752, that by the Earl of Hillsbrough and the celebrated Henry Fielding in 1753, and that by Mr. Bailey in 1758." In 1772, Baron Maseres, supported by the authority of Dr. Price and by the eloquence of Burke, got a bill carried through the House of Commons for establishing parochial life-annuities: it was rejected by the Lords.

In 1786, Mr. Acland<sup>(126)</sup> brought forward a scheme for a universal benefit society, of a compulsory kind: every one between 20 and 30 years old being required to subscribe at the following rates:—

A labourer earning 10d. a day, was to pay 2d. a week;  
A man-servant receiving as wages 1s. 6d.

a week or £4 a year . . . . . 2d. ,,

A female-servant receiving as wages 1s. 3d.

a week or £3 a year . . . . . 1½d. ,,

Impotent persons to be excused: married persons with a family not to be compelled to subscribe.

Persons between 30 and 50 to be allowed to join, on paying 1s. entrance-money, and an additional shilling a year for every year they exceeded the age of 30.

The fund so raised was to be applied to supporting the subscribers in times of sickness, infirmity, or old age.

A well-intended project, but how full of doubtful elements! Would the funds have been sufficient?

After all, has it not been fairly contended that our poor-law is a universal benefit-society, of which the funds are supplied by all classes? And it does,



in the last resort, maintain the destitute in times of want, sickness, infirmity, or old age. The funds are raised by compulsion from all occupiers of immoveable property, though in fact the tenants of country cottages commonly get excused on the ground of poverty: thus sharing the advantages of the fund without contributing to it.

It may be said that it is a strange benefit-society, in which one set of men pays the premiums, and another receives the advantages. I reply that it is only a minority of householders that are excused their poor-rates, and that the greater part of those who receive the advantages do also pay premiums: further, that the small householders who pay as well as receive, have nothing to complain of, inasmuch as a very large part of the fund is contributed by the middle and upper classes, who pay the premiums for the lowest.

On the whole, I think the poor-law may be fairly regarded as a compulsory benefit society, for the advantage of the labouring classes.

I have already mentioned that the poor-rates grew during the first half of the last century, although that was a time of unusual plenty and cheapness. The increase was still greater during the second half of that century. A great change took place between 1750 and 1800: England had been an agricultural country, exporting more wheat than it imported; it became a manufacturing country, importing more wheat than it exported.

The American war between 1776 and 1783, caused much disturbance, heavy taxation and misery. Gilbert's Act (22 George III, cap. 83) attempted to

mitigate the distress by a change which to our experience seems most unhappy. Nearly sixty years before (1723)<sup>(127)</sup> an Act had imposed a check "on the perversion of the rates to the encouragement of idleness and imposture, in the option given to parishes of refusing relief except in a workhouse." Gilbert's Act did away with this *workhouse test*, by enacting that "no able-bodied pauper should be obliged to resort to workhouses, but that work should be provided for them at or near their own houses."

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Notwithstanding this unfortunate alteration, the rates fell in amount during the next ten years.

Under the pressure of the high rates, a new practice had been introduced, that of farming the poor.<sup>(128)</sup>

"The greatest improvement, of modern times, respecting the care of the poor, or that, at least, which seems to have been most generally aimed at, has been, taking the Parochial Poor out of the hands of overseers and church-wardens, (who were suspected to have neglected or abused the great trust reposed in them during the short period of their continuing in office,) and *farming* them out to individuals. And the reduction of the rates, which, it will appear, took place, in many instances, immediately on the introduction of this regulation, must be confessed to have been extraordinary, and such as is by no means fully accounted for by those who content themselves with summarily ascribing it all to the existence of former abuses. Whatever was

the cause, or whatever has been the effect, of this regulation, it appears to be now very generally, (and, in my estimation, very deservedly,) falling into disesteem."

It would have been strange if it had not fallen into disesteem. The master who farmed the paupers, had to get out of them as much as work as he could, with the least possible expense in maintaining them. He had an interest in taking good care of the robust pauper, who might repay the cost by his work and furnish a profit: but he had no interest in taking good care of the very young, of the very old, of the impotent and infirm. A few examples will show how the organization worked.

"At<sup>(129)</sup> Houghton Regis, the Poor are principally maintained by a parish allowance at home. £12. 6s. a month is paid among 32 out-pensioners, who have, mostly, families: 5 other families receive occasional relief. Some money is likewise paid to the families of militia men, but the amount could not be correctly ascertained. There is also a poor-house, in which, at present, 4 poor people are supported. The poor in the house were farmed till about a month ago; the contractor, for maintaining them, usually received 2s. a head, weekly, in summer; and 2s. 6d. in winter: last year (1794) his allowance was raised to 3s. in summer, and 3s. 6d. in winter."

EPSOM. "The poor<sup>(130)</sup> of this parish have been farmed out, for more than 20 years; and, although," says the reporter, not Eden himself, "this system has often been, and still is, objected to by many, and not always without reason, none less objectionable in all it's parts can yet be hit upon. The first effect



of this scheme was to reduce the Poor's rates nearly one half; and it still keeps them down to about half-a-crown in the pound."

The master and farmer of the house can have got but little work out of his inmates: for many of the men were from 69 to 77 years old, and paralytic, asthmatic, idiotic; and the others were idlers or drunkards; the women not much better; and the children (many of them illegitimate) too young to do much.

LOUTH. "The present<sup>(131)</sup> farmer of the poor-house of industry, is a wool comber and manufacturer of worsted; he employs some of the poor in combing wool, spinning and knitting worsted, and some in common labour out of the house: he says, that he provides places for those boys and girls who do not like his business. At present, there are 39 Paupers in the house; consisting of 15 children, (under 12 years of age,) 9 men and 15 women. The farmer adds, that not more than 8 or 9 people are constantly employed: the others are either young children, old, or infirm; or are engaged in attending their sick companions, or in other necessary offices of the house. The farmer of the Poor, pays, at this time, about 22s. a week to 28 poor people out of the house, and about £65 a year to the families of 5 militia-men serving for this parish; and he is at the expense of all necessary medicinal assistance."

A "Bill of Fare used in this Poor-house," shows that butchers' meat was given for dinner, on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays: quantity not specified.

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		Average poor-rate.	
		s.	d.
on by the parish,	from 1777 to 1779	. 1	8
	and again from 1782 to 1784	. 1	10
	and again in 1794	. 2	8
It was let to a manufacturer in	1780-81	. 1	1½
	and again in 1785-93	. 1	5½
	and again in 1795	. 1	9

It will be observed how regularly the rates fell whenever the workhouse-factory was farmed.

There is <sup>(132)</sup> another case of Farnham, where a workhouse was built in 1791, at an expense of nearly £4,000. The contractor had the use of the house and furniture, and was paid £1,000 a year, besides pocketing the earnings of the paupers. The following comments are made.

“It is observable, <sup>(133)</sup> that, in those years, in which the Poor were not farmed, the Rates were highest; and that they have fallen, on the Poor being farmed: the reason is obvious; a contractor’s object is gain: he therefore *allows little* to the Poor *out of the house*, and keeps those in it closely to work; by which means, the idle, the lazy, and, (it may be added,) *the modest Poor*, and old people, (who decline making applications, that would oblige them to quit their old habitations and neighbours, for, perhaps, more elegant apartments, and profligate associates, in a workhouse,) often go unrelieved.”

These comments look very much like truth; and melancholy truth it is. It must have been one of the worst features of this system, that the Contractor would certainly be suspected: if he acted with firm-

ness he would be accused of severity; if he denied superfluities, he would be charged with parsimony. A worthy man would hardly take such an unpopular situation, and if he did so, would probably cease to be worthy.

Now and then, acts of gross cruelty come to light, as in this case of 1798, near Lewes.<sup>(134)</sup>

"Last week the following case, to the disgrace of humanity, occurred in the parish of Framfield, in this county.—A poor girl, *seven years old*, daughter of one Carter, an industrious labourer, (whose numerous family had compelled him to send the child to the workhouse,) not having been able to perform the work which her tyrannic task-master had allotted her, owing to large chilblains which almost covered her hands, he chastised her, and threatened to repeat it before she went to bed, which so terrified the poor child, that, to avoid the second punishment, she, about dark on Monday evening, escaped from the house, on Blackboy's Common, with an intention of getting to her father's habitation, about two miles distant; but having missed her way, she wandered about the common as long as she was able, when she dropped, and was at break of day the next morning, found by Mr. Bucknell, a farrier, on her bare knees, stooping forward, with her face resting on the ground, near a bog, and almost frozen to death."

The poor child recovered, although she had been ten hours exposed to the cold. It turned out that the punishment had been inflicted by the manager of the house and not by the Contractor, who had other houses of this kind on his hands, and was



away from this one at the time. That great cruelty had been practised was proved by the fact that the Contractor and all the persons he employed, were dismissed, and by the efforts made by the parish officers to get the offender punished. He absconded however, under fear of prosecution for another similar offence. The comment of the Lewes journal seems reasonable.

“We would recommend to the perusal of the heads of parishes, the Reports of the Society for bettering the Condition of the Poor; which will clearly point out to them the impolicy, if not the inhumanity, of letting out to hire the maintenance and labour of the poor.”

The French war which broke out in 1793, brought with it great distress to the working classes, and especially to the farm labourers. Unfortunately it found them already pinched, in consequence of the rise in the price of wheat.<sup>(135)</sup>

	£.	s.	d.	d.
Ten years' average per quarter, to 1715	. 2	4	2	
„ „ to 1725	. 1	15	5	
„ „ to 1735	. 1	15	2	
„ „ to 1745	. 1	12	1	
„ „ to 1755	. 1	13	3	
„ „ to 1765	. 1	19	3	
Average of the 60 years	. 1	16	7	
Supposing that bread bore the same				
proportion to wheat that it bears				
now, the 4 lb. loaf during the 60				
years would have cost . . . .				

Ten years' average per quarter, to 1775 .	£.	s.	d.	d.
	2	11	4	6½
„ „ to 1785 .	2	7	8	5¾
„ „ to 1795 .	2	14	3	7

The labourers in the earlier period were earning 6s. a week wages; and after paying for rent and clothes, 3s. or 3s. 6d. a week was the most they had left for bread: a rise in price of one half (from 4½d. to 7d.) meant something approaching to starvation. I do not wonder then, at the following remarks by Mr. J. Howlett in 1792.<sup>(136)</sup>

“I fear the tattered garments, the meagre famished faces, the naked shivering limbs, of the poor of the parish in question, will suggest other causes of the *increased* rates besides that of *increased* luxury; to which Mr. Lord imputes them; especially if, upon inquiry, it should turn out that the highest possible earnings of the labourers, *added to the rates*, do not amount per head to above three-fourths of the expense of each pauper, in the most *economical house of industry*, in the county of Suffolk.”

But as the war went on matters became worse.

We have seen that from 1705 to 1765, the price

	£.	s.	d.	d.
per quarter was . . . . .	1	14	7	
and per 4lb. loaf, probably . . . .				4½
and that these had gone up between				
1785 and 1795 to . . . . .	2	14	3	7
But during the ten years ending				
1805, these had risen to . . . .	4	1	2	10
and during the ten years ending				
1815, these had risen to . . . .	4	17	6	1s.

I have said 1s. for the 4lb. loaf, but it was in fact as high sometimes as 1s. 3d. and 1s. 6d.

This increase arose out of the waste of food by the armies on the Continent and the hindrances to agriculture there, and the high charge for carrying corn to England, together with the enhanced rates of insurance.

What rise of wages could meet this enhancement? A family such as originally spent 3s. a week on bread, would now have to spend 9s., or at some periods 10s. or 12s. In these cases, wages always lag behind and only reach the new standard gradually. After some weeks or months of partial starvation, the labourer gets his extra 1s. a week: immediately another rise in bread: more weeks or months of want.

The farmers too, objected that if they raised the rate of wages, they should find a difficulty in lowering them again on the return of peace and plenty. They therefore preferred paying part of the labourers' wages out of the rates.

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A young reader of Malthus is startled by such a passage as the following; unless indeed, he had previously become acquainted with the system of supplementing wages.<sup>(137)</sup>

"It is a just remark of Adam Smith, that the attempts of the legislature to raise the pay of curates had always been ineffectual, on account of the cheap and abundant supply of them, occasioned by the bounties given to young persons educated for the church at the universities. And it is equally true that no human efforts can keep up the price of day-labour so as to enable a man to support on



his earnings a family of a moderate size, so long as *those who have more than two children* are considered as having a valid claim to parish assistance."

This principle of finding maintenance for a man according to his needs, and not according to his deserts, is true socialism. It was adopted however, by a Tory Parliament, and was favoured by farmers and their landlords for the reason already assigned; that wages once raised during war, would not easily be lowered again on the return of peace. There was also at the bottom, on the part of Mr. Pitt and others, some belief in the old-fashioned maxim, that a man in raising up and supporting a large family, added to the strength and resources of his country: a maxim perfectly true among some nations, and at periods when disease and neglect so carried off young children as to make depopulation an object of dread; but a maxim false during the last few centuries, when the danger is not want of people but want of food for their support.

The practice however, of aiding labourers in proportion to the number of their children, was fully established, and held its ground in spite of the condemnation by economists. The Royal Commissioners of forty years ago, gave the following scale as prevailing in a parish of Kent: and the *magistrates* had the power of ordering such a scale to be observed.<sup>(138)</sup>

"When labourers are out of employ, or only in partial employ, their wages are made up according to the following scale:—

	s.	d.	s.	d.
Single man from . . .	3	6	to	7 0
Man and wife . . .				10 0
„ with 1 or 2 children				12 0
„ „ 3 „ .	3			13 0
„ „ 4 „ .	4			14 0
„ „ 5 „ .	5			15 6
„ „ 6 „ .	6			17 0
„ „ 7 „ .	7			18 6
„ „ 8 „ .	8			20 0

“The labourers are sent to work on the roads if there is anything to do, but, they are paid according to this scale whether they work or not. On Saturday the 13th October last, 27 men were paid from 12s. upwards each, though no work whatever had been done.”

Eastbourne in Sussex had a similar scale, which had arisen thus.<sup>(139)</sup>

There had been “cottage rents paid by the parish—allowance according to the number of children—vast sums expended on unproductive labour, paid at the highest rate of wages, equal to and even exceeding those paid by farmers to their industrious labourers; so that women have been heard to lament that their husbands were not in parish employ, alleging that they would be better off. In the year 1830, a considerable reduction of wages had taken place, many men were out of work, and the wages to single men on the parish did not exceed 7d. per day. A general spirit of discontent broke out. Incendiarism prevailed to a frightful extent; an eye-witness informed me, that on one night there were three fires burning at once, in the stack-yards of farmers

within the parish; and that for nearly a month, hardly a night passed without conflagrations in the neighbourhood, and tumultuous assemblies of labourers demanding a rise of wages. Under these alarming circumstances, a meeting was called, and an agreement made that the wages should be 2s. per day for an able-bodied married man, 1s. 6d. for a single man of 18, and from 3s. 6d. to 5s. per week for boys from 15 to 18. That the surplus labourers on the parish should be paid according to the following scale:—

	s.	d.
Single man, 18 years old,	6	
Man and wife . . .	9	
„ 1 child .	10	
„ 2 children	12	
„ 3 „	12	and a gall. of flour, 13 4
„ 4 „	12	and 2 galls. of flour 16 8

“And so on, till for 10 children, the pay might amount to 18s. 8d. per week. A discretion was given to the overseers to grant the flour, or place the children in the poor-house; the latter measure is so unpopular that they dare not put it in practice. The effect of this forced rise of parish pay was soon apparent: the sale of the farmer’s produce could not suffice for both wages and rates.”

The premium given to marriage in these scales of pay, produced its natural effect.<sup>(140)</sup>

“The population of this parish is beyond the demand for labour, but early marriages are constantly taking place without any consideration on that score: of six of these marriages contracted last October, it was expected that most of the parties would be



on the parish pay-list in the month of November. A man lately married a girl, who left her place for that purpose on *Wednesday*, they applied for relief on the *Saturday*."

There<sup>(141)</sup> is an obvious unfairness in supplementing wages with rates; the effect is ruinous to the small householders, many of them struggling to live, and in danger, through increased rates, of being themselves driven to the parish.

Arthur Young saw this unfairness. He said<sup>(142)</sup> that though it was just that all persons in good circumstances should contribute to the support of the disabled poor, it was unjust that they should help to support the farmers' labourers. He pointed out how unequally the charge fell even on the farmers: how heavily on the small tenant employing perhaps no labourer, but who had to pay for part of the maintenance of the labourers employed by the larger farmers. With a rate of 10s. in the £, the small holder at a rent of £20 would pay £10 a year to the servants of his richer neighbours. The same injustice prevailed as to the clergyman, the widow lady, and all other persons who did not employ farm-labourers, but who had to pay largely towards their wages.

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The aim of the poor-laws as framed in the earlier reigns, was to find work and subsistence for those who wanted them; and thus, with the help of the halter for the incorrigibly idle, to get rid of the wandering bands that plagued the country. The modifications at the end of last century, were in-

tended to relieve the destitution caused by wars and increased prices of wheat. The injudicious continuation of the new acts, by which a man was entitled to parish relief in aid of wages, and that in proportion to the number of his family, resulted, as we have seen, in gross irregularities. I will not deny that during a famine, or even a dearth, it is necessary to give aid according to the need of the applicants: that during the Irish famine or the Lancashire cotton-dearth, the funds for charity were necessarily doled out according to the number of mouths to be filled. But such measures should be temporary: the modifications of the poor-law were permanent. When the quartern loaf got up from 5d., to 1s., to 1s. 3d., to 1s. 6d., that was dearth, if not famine, to labourers earning 6s. a week, whose employers were afraid to double or treble the rate of wages. But even if it were necessary to supplement wages in proportion to the size of the family, and to give to magistrates authority to order relief when overseers were hard-hearted and penurious, such arrangements should have been treated as exceptional, and should have been put an end to, when the necessity for them ceased. Failing this limitation, the farm labourers came to depend too much upon parish pay. I have mentioned <sup>(143)</sup> the parish of Eastbourne: here are some more particulars of its condition in 1832.

“From a printed statement of the expenditure of the parish, are taken the following items of sums received by families of paupers:—

John Carter, bricklayer, aged 43, wife, and 5 children,  
 at an allowance of 14s. 8d. per week, cost the  
 parish last year . . . . £42 12 4

Joseph Carter, 34, wife and 7 children, at 16s. 8d. . . . .	£49 11 8
J. Mitchell, 46, wife and 2 children, at 12s. . . . .	35 4 0
G. Paul, 50, fisherman, wife and 2 chil- dren, at 15s. 6d. . . . .	25 8 9

This lavish expenditure, which has been *extorted* by the violence of the able-bodied, is *not* extended to the *aged and infirm*, the proper objects of the Poor-Laws, as may be seen by the following items:—

	Per Week.
Mary Carter, widow, aged 76, at 2s. 6d. . . . .	£6 10 0
Lydia Collins, „ „ 90 2s. . . . .	5 4 0
Ann Chapman, „ „ 75 1s. 6d. . . . .	3 18 0

“In the month of December, 1832, four healthy young men, receiving from 12s. to 14s. per week from the parish, refused to work at threshing for a farmer at 2s. 6d. and a quart of ale per day, and the only punishment inflicted on them by the parish officers, was taking off half a day's pay, 1s.; at the same time, a poor widow, aged 75, could obtain but 1s. per week for her support from the vestry. The fishermen being secure of pay without labour, refused to go out to sea in winter: one said, ‘Why should I expose myself to fatigue and danger, when the parish supports my wife and pays my rent?’ The masters in the fishery have in consequence been forced to send to Hastings for hands requisite to man their boats. Rent of cottages is generally paid for families of three children, to the annual amount of £307. Since the *time of the riots*, and the establishment of the present scale of parish wages, the vestries held every fortnight for determining relief are very ill attended,—the parishioners seeming to despair of



any improvement; and anxious hopes are expressed of the interference of Government."

We see that riots were brought to bear upon the vestry. Other influences were used to coerce refractory overseers.<sup>(144)</sup>

"There is also abundant evidence to show the utter inefficiency of the present class of Overseers. It appears that when an Overseer is inclined to do his duty, he can do it only at the risk of great loss, perhaps ruin, to himself. For example, where an Overseer is a tradesman, the applicants for relief flock to his shop, and by endeavouring to excite the compassion of his customers, expose him, if, as his duty demands, he steadily persists in refusing relief till he has inquired into the circumstances of each case, to the charge of hard-heartedness, and thus to injury in his trade. A case is mentioned where three women successively came one day to the shop of an Overseer, each with a child in her arms ill of the measles. The Overseer would not relieve them at the time, but took down their addresses, and afterwards visited them; from which he discovered that there were not three children, but one child; the same child having been brought each time."

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An unfortunate practice grew in the country, out of this improvident grant of a right to out-door relief. Since the parish was obliged to maintain the labourers, it naturally desired to get some work in return. But to find profitable work has generally been an insuperable difficulty in workhouses, gaols, and industrial schools: it was therefore arranged

that the unemployed people should be distributed in rotation among the rate-payers, who should set them to work and partly pay them. This was called the *roundsman* or billet system, because the paupers went round the parish and were billeted on all in turn.<sup>(146)</sup>

“So far back as 1788, we find Sir William Young, in a bill which he introduced for amending the Poor-Laws, proposing, in order to relieve the agricultural labourers who were out of work in winter, that the vestry should be empowered to settle a rate of wages for the winter months, and send the unemployed labourers round to the parishioners in rotation, proportionally as they are rated, two-thirds of the wages to be paid by the employer and one-third out of the rates. We likewise find, in Sir F. Eden’s account of the parish of *Winslow* in 1795, that most of the labourers were ‘*on the rounds*’—that is, going to work from one farm-house to another *round* the parish, sometimes as many as forty, and unless the householders employ them they are wholly paid by the parish. Children ten years old are, it is said, thus put on the rounds.”

At a much later period, about 1830, the result is thus described.<sup>(146)</sup>

“In reference to the effect of any number of superfluous hands, occasion may be taken to remark, that the same conclusion appears to be the result of the observations of several of the Commissioners. And this is, that a very small surplus has the effect of making the labour market appear to be very much overstocked, and causes a fall of wages much greater than at a cursory glance might be expected. Every labourer who is thrown out of employ in the regular

way, and employed on what is called the *roundsman* or *billet* system, i.e. every surplus labourer, as it were reproduces himself. A surplus labourer is thrown upon the farmer. This obliges him to dismiss, and consequently throws out of employment, one of his former labourers, who becomes dependent on parish assistance in consequence. The parish now has two men at the *zero* point of pauperism instead of one; and when the second man is in like manner thrown upon the farmer, he creates another; and so on. The upshot of all which is, that the number of originally surplus labourers is finally maintained by the parish, but with the accompaniment of bringing all the labourers of the parish to one common state of pauperism."

I see no evidence that the farmers generally were so unwise as to thus bring all the labourers of a parish into a state of pauperism: in many cases no doubt, they would keep the billeted labourer as an extra hand, and get from him what *additional* work they could. I see a case mentioned,<sup>(147)</sup> in which a farmer paying less than £300 a year for rent, and £100 a year for rates, and employing voluntarily 10 men and 3 boys, was obliged to employ in addition, 4 men and 3 boys: and another case in which a farmer who required only 5 men and boys, had to employ 7 more.

Under such arrangements, any labourer who became possessed of property, lost his place, which was wanted for a pauper. A certain man who had risen from the lowest rank and had made money, left legacies to his relatives who were labourers. The executors were urged to pay the legacies quickly, in the interest of the parish, as the legatees when in



possession of the money would have no claim for employment. Some of the legatees belonged to another parish, and their treatment was still harsher, for the authorities withdrew their employment because they were in expectation of legacies.

But suppose a labourer had *saved* a little money : that might seem a good reason for refusing him parish pay ; though it was felt that if it were an absolute rule to refuse assistance to a saving man, it would be a severe discouragement of prudence. An act was therefore passed in the time of Malthus,<sup>(148)</sup> though not with his approbation, enabling the justices at their discretion, to order relief to men having a little money in a savings-bank. At a later date, such a folly as saving money was in some cases dealt with more unkindly. In a certain Hertfordshire parish,<sup>(149)</sup> John Watford, a steady, industrious, trustworthy man, had remained single, and had painfully scraped together about £100. Watford was turned out of his place to make room for a pauper billeted on his employer. He did not apply for parish assistance from the rates. But he did apply to the farmers of his own parish for work : this was refused him, because there were paupers to be employed, and it was well known that he had saved money, and could not come upon the parish, although any of them would willingly have taken him had it been otherwise.

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Another subject of complaint formerly among economists was the character of the diet in work-houses : spare enough no doubt when it was doled out by contractors ; but too good in other cases. It

is certainly unfortunate when a pauper finds himself better fed than he was at home. Arthur Young<sup>(150)</sup> found with astonishment, that in a certain Devonshire parish the landlords paid the rates, which amounted to 7s. in the £, and allowed the paupers to take tea twice a day. Young however, anticipated Cobbett's hostility to tea. Eden<sup>(151)</sup> gives us the diet-table of many workhouses at the very end of last century: at Derby, meat for dinner three times a week, and milk porridge for breakfast every day, with broth or milk porridge for supper: in a Durham parish, meat with broth and roots every day; bread and milk or hasty pudding with treacle for breakfast and supper: at Ealing, (Middlesex), three days a week,  $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of beef, the  $\frac{1}{3}$ th part of a quartern loaf; every day a pint of small beer: at Epsom,<sup>(152)</sup> "each person is allowed a pint of small beer, *both* at dinner and supper (making a quart of beer a day). Their provisions are not only plentiful, but, in general, wholesome and good."

Thirty years later, the Commissioners found great evils resulting from this practice of giving better food in the workhouse than could be got at home.<sup>(153)</sup>

"Have you observed the operation of the advantage given to paupers over independent labourers?"

"It is too notorious. When the working men who have never been in the habit of obtaining parochial relief, get into the workhouse by any accident, they are only to be got out with the greatest difficulty: the parish officers are forced to bribe them out. The workmen say they cannot go out unless certain sums are given them to 'set them up.' . . . A family, consisting of an agricultural labourer, his wife, and

six children, some time since came into the Newington Workhouse from Norfolk. Before they were classed with the other paupers, they were allowed to dine by themselves. When the regular rations were served out to them, they were all in astonishment at the quantity; the man had never before been in a workhouse, and he especially was amazed: when the food was first taken in, he asked the person who served it how much of it was intended for them? and was lost in astonishment when he found that they were allowed the whole of it. . . . It is unnecessary to observe that we had the greatest difficulty in getting this family out of the workhouse."

At the same time that this pauperising profusion was going on in some parishes, in others "the dietaries were of a much less generous character than those which have been adopted at the recommendation of the Poor-Law Commissioners," and the provision for the old and impotent was often miserably deficient. Speaking of the metropolitan parish of St. George the Martyr, a writer says<sup>(154)</sup>:—"We cannot yet call to mind, without a feeling of loathing, the spectacle which presented itself to our eyes when we were introduced into the Ward No. 13 of this workhouse. It is a small room, about 23 feet by 20, containing 7 double beds, and occupied by 13 old and decrepid women. When we went into the room they were at dinner: and no adequate accommodation being provided to enable them to take their meals with some slight attention to personal comfort, the beds in the room were made to answer the purpose of tables and chairs, and the provisions in most cases were spread out on the coverlids of the beds. In this room these



poor creatures were, and we believe still are, *compelled* to spend the day and night. . . . No wonder that under such management there should be in this house 33 persons on the sick-list—a larger proportion than we ever before met with in any other workhouse. . . . Compared with the workhouse of St. George the Martyr, the new workhouses, or ‘bastiles,’ are palaces.”

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Such a practice of pampering able-bodied persons, while ill-treating the aged and infirm, brought with it vast charges to the parish. We do not wonder at high rates during the period of our war with France, when as we have seen, bread doubled and trebled in price, without any corresponding rise of wages. In the year 1800, in an examination of witnesses before the House of Commons, on the subject of the woollen manufactures, the following evidence was given<sup>(155)</sup>:—that at Barking, in Essex, the rate up to 1795 had been 8s. to 10s. in the £, but that in consequence of a decline in the woollen manufacture, the rate had risen to £1. 4s. 6d. on the rack rent: that at Lavenham, in Suffolk, the rate, which to 1796 had been about 10s., had in 1800 reached 32s. on the rack rent; the rise being attributed as in the other case to a decline in the woollen manufacture. In the year 1801, Arthur Young<sup>(156)</sup> advocated a scheme for inclosing wastes and assigning small plots to labourers, requiring however, on their part, a renunciation of all future claims to parish assistance; he said that rates had risen to 15s. in the £ for a single quarter. “The price of corn,” he said, “has risen, and with it the distress and misery of the poor, notwithstanding these

prodigious taxes levied for their support. What a contrast between the system of providing for the poor by rates at 10s. to 20, 30, 40, and 60s. in the £, in the midst of misery and wretchedness, and that of land and cows, with rates in the same period of 3d., 4d. and 6d. in the £!"

Thirty years later,<sup>(137)</sup> the commissioners on the English poor-law declared that the oppression of the rates was a growing evil. They mentioned the case of Cholesbury in Buckinghamshire, where in 1832, the collection of the rate had "suddenly ceased, in consequence of the impossibility to continue its collection, the landlords having given up their rents, the farmers their tenancies, and the clergyman his glebe and his tithes. . . . The evidence exhibits no other instance of the abandonment of a parish, but it contains many in which the pressure of the poor-rate has reduced the rent to half, or to less than half, of what it would have been if the land had been situated in an unpauperised district, and some in which it has been impossible for the owner to find a tenant."

This singular case of Cholesbury is mentioned by the late Mr. Nassau William Senior,<sup>(138)</sup> in his *Essays on Ireland*, as an example of the possible results of rashly admitting the right of all families to employment and maintenance. Mr. Senior quotes a letter written in 1833, by the unfortunate Mr. Jeston, the rector who had given up his glebe and his tithes.

Mr. Jeston had heard from the oldest of his parishioners that there had been a golden age, sixty years earlier, when only one person was in receipt of parish relief. How the deterioration had taken place we are not told, but it was not sudden: at last in

1833 the whole land was thrown out of cultivation, and all the population came upon the parish.

"About October last, the parish officers, not being able to collect any more funds, threw up their books, and from that time their duties have fallen upon myself; for the poor, left without any means of maintenance, assembled in a body at my door, whilst I was in bed, and applied to me for advice and food."

Mr. Jeston's income was under £140 a year, but he provided these destitute people with food to keep them alive until he could get for them a rate in aid, from an adjoining parish.

If this overpowering amount of rates had secured the well-being of the labourers, it might have been endured: unfortunately, it left them in the greatest distress. About the time of the Cholesbury catastrophe, a petition from the Bedford freeholders says,<sup>(160)</sup>

"That the rates levied for the maintenance of the poor-law, are becoming annually more burdensome upon the occupiers of the land in England, inasmuch as in many instances their actual amount has increased, *while in almost all* parishes they absorb the proceeds of a greater proportion of the productions of the soil, by reason of the reduction of prices.

. . . It could be shown that there are parishes, purely agricultural, where there are at some seasons from fifty to ninety able men who, destitute of other work, are employed by the parish, and receiving four shillings per week, or less, for unmarried men; and scarcely even as much as ten shillings per week for the most numerous families."

The condition of Bedfordshire labourers is described thus by a county member:—



“In January, 1829, there were ninety-six prisoners for trial in Bedford Gaol, of whom seventy-six were able-bodied men, in the prime of life, and chiefly of general good character, who were driven to crime by *sheer want*, and who would have been valuable subjects, had they been placed in a situation where by the exercise of their health and strength they could have earned a subsistence.”

The condition of the middle classes in many rural districts of the South of England was most uneasy.<sup>(100)</sup>

“The farmers and their families had no comfort in their lives. All day they looked with unavoidable suspicion upon the most ill-conditioned of their neighbours, and on every stranger who came into the parish. All night they were wakeful, either acting as patrols or looking out towards the stock-yards, or listening for the rumble of the fire-engine. If a man, weary with patrolling for three or four nights, hoped for a night's sleep, and went the last thing to his rick-yard, and explored every corner and visited every shed on his premises, he might find his chamber illuminated by his burning ricks by the time he could get up stairs. This was naturally a time for malicious or encroaching persons to send threatening letters, and for foolish jesters to play off practical jokes, and for timid persons to take needless alarms, and for all the discontented to make the most of their grievances; and a dreary season of apprehension indeed it was. The military were harassed with fruitless marches, their nightly path lighted by fires from behind, whichever way they turned. Large rewards were offered—£500 for a single conviction; and these rewards were believed to have been now

and then obtained by the instigators, while the poor tools were given over to destruction."

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In the present section I have attempted to show how it happened that poor-laws were decried: I have traced the condemnation of them to the abuses and corruptions which crept into the administration of the laws.

The attempts made long before the Reformation to put down vagrancy, came gradually into the well-known form of the 43rd Elizabeth, the main provisions of which were almost such as to satisfy the modern socialists, inasmuch as they gave every one a right to work and wages. Under these regulations, the rates levied grew to be very considerable, bearing in fact a far larger proportion to the general taxation of the country than they bear at the present day. A hundred years ago, the war with the American Colonies aggravated the evil: the system of farming the paupers then introduced, much diminished the rates; but this frugal practice was found so liable to abuse that it was abandoned. Afterwards, the great increase of manufactures in England, followed by the wars with Napoleon, doubled and trebled the price of bread; and the farmers unfortunately, backed by their landlords, chose to supplement wages with parish relief rather than raise the rate of wages. The measures taken for doling out so much a week to every man, woman, and child, which could be tolerable only under the pressure of necessity, were unfortunately made permanent. There followed in the end very sad abuses: men, under the roundsman

system, billeted on the ratepayers; labourers receiving a legacy dismissed from their employment in favour of paupers; prudent men who had painfully saved up their wages, refused work until they could show that their hoard was exhausted; strong men bullying overseers into giving relief, while aged and impotent women were half starved or ill-treated; in some workhouses a diet so profuse as to attract independent labourers to come in; rates so high as to impoverish landlords and tenants, and such as in one extravagant case to throw the whole parish out of cultivation; the labouring classes badly paid, and sometimes driven to crime by want; the farmers in many cases living in perpetual dread of incendiarism.

Such a system, so abused, so corrupted, might form a plausible excuse for those who condemned poor-laws altogether.

#### VII.

THIS plausible excuse has now been cut off. The grosser of the abuses have ceased. The new poor-law, though imperfect in its administration, is at least founded on the true principle, that though no person should be refused relief, yet the pauper recipient should, all things considered, feel himself worse off than the independent labourer.

This reconstitution of the law had long been regarded as one of the great national tasks to be accomplished. It is only wonderful that it was not undertaken earlier.

It was not in the towns but in the country that the grossest abuses prevailed: it was the farm-



labourers and not the mechanics whose wages had been eked out by the rates : it was not in a town that a couple married on Wednesday and applied for relief on Saturday : it was in the rural parish of Cholesbury that the farmers threw up their holdings, that the landlords lost their rents and the clergyman his tithes, and that the whole labouring poor, thrown out of employment, had no rates to fall back upon, but had to appeal to neighbouring parishes for a rate in aid. I grant that there were abuses in towns : as, for example, I have myself known an excellent and decent workman, who having earned for years his regular 30s. a week, got parish assistance at once, when trade fell off, and this I fear, because his employer was an overseer.

But it was in the rural districts that the grossest, the most obvious, the most costly abuses flourished : it was there that the pauperising influence of parish pay was thoroughly felt. I say then, that it is a wonderful fact that the law was allowed to continue unaltered. If it had been the great towns which had suffered, we might have said that the great towns had at that time no direct influence in Parliament : but it was the farmers, the landlords, the clergy, who mainly suffered ; and they were the predominant classes in both houses of parliament, either directly or by their representatives.

The apathy of these classes was caused by a combination of circumstances. The country had lately emerged from the most alarming and oppressive war it had ever experienced : the horrors of the French revolution, the subjugation of Belgium and Holland, of Italy and Spain and Switzerland, the

repeated victories of our seamen and the final destruction of the French fleet, the European coalition headed and subsidized by England, the fall and the reappearance and the final overthrow of Napoleon, had so familiarized the minds of men with magnificent horrors, that they could scarcely fix their attention on anything less than a revolution or a battle.

After the peace came frightful distress and radicalism rampant. Statesmen feared, or affected to fear, the removal of a single stone from the fabric of our "glorious constitution," lest the whole edifice should crumble about their ears: better submit to laws bad in themselves than risk the disturbance of the foundation of all law.

Add to this that office had been nearly engrossed by one party for forty years, and that the Tories had thus been hardened in their aversion to all changes. This may account for the apathy of farmers, landlords, and clergy, who endured the irritating and shocking abuses of the poor-laws, rather than raise the hated cry for reform.

At last, in 1830, a sudden and violent change took place. The ordinances of Prince Polignac brought down the throne of Charles X. Great Britain felt the shock: the long repressed liberalism of the country raised its head: even moderate men felt that the time was come for a reconstruction of the electoral system, and that it was impossible any longer to refuse a share of political power to the great manufacturing centres, to Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, towns of great population, of accumulated wealth, of untiring activity, and of an intelligence far

above that of the comparatively slothful inhabitants of the country districts. After a struggle which touched on revolution, the reform-bill was carried, and on the 7th June, 1832, received the royal assent.

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Four months even before this time,<sup>(161)</sup> Lord Althorp had announced the determination of the Whig ministry to enter on the subject of poor-law reform; and for the purpose of unravelling the many tangled questions relating to it, their resolution to appoint a commission to inquire into the different systems adopted in various parishes. The commission was appointed accordingly, and after long and careful inquiry during nearly two years, produced a report.<sup>(162)</sup>

On two of the most interesting questions, the Commissioners expressed a decided opinion. First; as to the relief of able-bodied persons: they said that the greatest abuses of the old law were found in connection with such relief; that if they had been convinced that these abuses were inseparable from it, they would have recommended the abolition of that practice; but that they were so far from being convinced of this, that they advised regulations under which "such relief may be afforded safely and even beneficially." Secondly; as to the laws of settlement: here their opinions are more revolutionary. They enumerate the evils attending the laws; the falsehood, fraud, and perjury: but they say that great as are these evils, there are "other evils greater and more extensive,"<sup>(163)</sup> evils which are the more intense in proportion as the settlement district is smaller; and which, though they might be mitigated



by the increase in size of such districts, could be altogether corrected only by the abolition of all laws of settlement.

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The Commissioners' panacea, their philosopher's stone, their infallible elixir of social life, is the workhouse test. They recommend that<sup>(184)</sup> "all relief whatever to able-bodied persons or to their families, otherwise than in well-regulated workhouses, shall be declared unlawful," and shall sooner or later cease.

These recommendations have since been partly carried out, but only partly. The able-bodied pauper is still relieved: the laws of settlement have been modified, not abolished; modified too in a way different from the suggested enlargement of settlement districts: the workhouse test has been adopted partially, not wholly.

This workhouse test is so entirely the foundation of the proposed system, that any striking objection to it should be fully considered. Now there is one very striking objection to its universal application. A decent mechanic is thrown out of work: he applies to the guardians: they tell him to come into the house: he goes back to his wife, and they determine to struggle on. They are already in debt to the huckster: they pawn their clock, their clothes, their beds, everything they have: their strength goes, their children pine away, the man goes off in despair, the wife and children at last go into the house, the family is broken up, and probably for ever: for how is the man to pay his debts, to redeem his furniture,

to reëstablish his household? Guardians of experience have told me, that to insist in towns on the workhouse test, is simply to manufacture paupers.

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It was I suppose, such considerations as these, that made the proposed law unpopular. That it was so is proved by the fact that from 1830 to 1840, "the only instance in which our most influential newspapers have combined for any given object, was to prevent the passing of the Poor Law Act—and they failed; the minority of the House of Commons, where their influence was necessarily most felt, being nineteen."<sup>(164A)</sup>

As regards the laws of settlement again, I cannot see the feasibility of doing away with them, unless by a reconstruction of the whole system. Unions vary much in their liberality towards their paupers. I could point out, adjacent to a great town, a country union in which relief is doled out sparingly, while the town guardians are comparatively liberal. Even as it is, the shabby country guardians drive to the town an unfair proportion of the needy: if there were no law of settlement, the liberal town would get them all. The result would probably be that the town would have to copy their neighbour's shabbiness, and there would be a struggle among the unions to get a bad name among the poor.

If you threw town and country together, each enlarged union would still have neighbouring unions, competing for a bad name as a scarecrow to the poor. If you abolish the law of settlement, you must do away with local guardians and vest the

whole management in a Central Board : in which case a distressed person would get relief wherever he might happen to be, and the expense would fall on the national fund. Among certain able writers, of more logic than experience, it is fashionable to decry local management, by carefully recording every example of failure : the numerous examples of success, because they are successes, are never heard of ; and readers are not reminded of the frequent failures of administration by a central government.

Thus, for some years, there was in the London press an outcry against the City Police, founded on the notion that such a local institution must interfere with the due arrangements of the police of the whole metropolis, and that therefore it ought to be done away with. The notion may be a perfectly correct one. But the mode of enforcing it was not just : it consisted in seizing on every case of abuse or inconvenience and holding it up to the public as something extravagantly absurd ; at the same time leaving it to be inferred that the centralized metropolitan police was an impeccable body. At last it came out that this centralized force had got drowsy, imperfect in preventing offences, incapable of detecting them, backward in recognizing the new wants that spring up, deaf to public cries for reform. After these discoveries, the City Police had a new lease of repose.

So it would be if a Central Poor-Law Board had the present local functions committed to its charge. How could such a board manage all the thousand Unions of the country ? We should find ourselves in the condition of old France, where the repair of



a village steeple could not be effected without the consent of a minister in Paris: consent that might be given at the end of a year or two.

The modern practice seems to be the best: local administration, subject to central control. This is the way in which our prisons are managed: the magistrates and town councils do the work, while government inspectors ascertain by occasional visits that there are no abuses. It is the same with our lunatic asylums and industrial schools. Local administration I say, and central control.

For a local administration of relief, a law of settlement is necessary, unless you would have unions trying to drive the poor from their bounds by harsh treatment. The commissioners' recommendation to abolish settlements has not been adopted: instead of it the legislature has determined to relax the conditions on which a settlement is obtained; to make a man belong, not to the parish in which he was born, but to the parish in which he has worked during the preceding twelve months.

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Another of the old abuses which have been corrected, is the practice of giving relief in aid of wages: the practice of supplementing the eight or ten shillings of earnings by four, five, or ten shillings paid by the parish. I have given my opinion that under great pressure such a practice may be necessary for a time: as for instance, if the quartern loaf should rise from its present 6d. to 1s. 6d., and should continue at that price for months, while wages did not rise in proportion, it would be better to give relief

in aid than permit starvation. But it would be a mistake to make such a practice permanent.

It appears that there is still much relief given to supplement wages, and loud complaints about this have lately been made. But an important distinction has been overlooked. The old abuse was, the giving parish pay to an able-bodied man fully employed : it is quite a different matter if you give parish pay to an old or infirm man who can only work a little. In aiding the able-bodied man fully employed, the parish in fact pays part of the wages, and so keeps down the general rate of wages, to the injury of the single man and the married man without children : it gives a premium to early marriage and large families : it develops a dependent and pauper peasantry. But this is not so if the parish helps the cripple or the old man, who can do a little, or the labourer whom a frost has thrown out of work. Especially in towns, where employment is precarious, it is better to aid a man to live at home than it is to compel him to pawn his goods, sink into hopeless poverty and finally go into the house without hope of recovery.

My conclusion is that except in times of peculiar pressure, an able-bodied man in full employment ought not to receive assistance at home : that if the farmers of a parish refuse a fair rate of wages, the labourers should be encouraged to migrate to another part of the country or to emigrate : that in the case of old and impotent persons and of men thrown out of work, it is wise to assist them in living at home so long as their incapacity lasts, and this especially in towns.

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Another problem of great difficulty is how best to deal with illegitimacy. The problem is of course far from being a new one: in the 18th Elizabeth, a quarter of a century before the final law, we find<sup>(165)</sup> :—

“First, concerning bastards, begotten and born out of lawful matrimony, (an offence against God’s law and man’s law), the said bastards being now left to be kept at the charge of the parish where they were born, to the great burthen and defrauding of the relief of the impotent aged true poor of the same parish, and to the evil example and encouragement of lewd life.”

Justices were directed to punish both the mother and the reputed father, and to call upon both of them to maintain the child.

Penalties were again threatened so late as the beginning of this century: justices being authorized to commit to a house of correction any mother of a chargeable bastard.

The Commissioners declared that in practice the laws worked very badly. The object mainly pursued by the overseers had been the saving of expense to the parish: the parents had been induced or compelled to marry, and at the cost even of perjury a father had to be found.<sup>(166)</sup>

The recommendations however, would not be readily approved or accepted. They were that *the mother alone* should be required to support the child, and that all Acts which punish *or charge* the father should be repealed.<sup>(167)</sup> The new Act nearly carried out these recommendations: it took away from the mother all claim on the father, though it did give



the overseers the power of applying to a court of quarter-sessions against him.

The Commissioners<sup>(168)</sup> assign a reason for exonerating the father, which to most persons seemed harsh : they say that in the old system, under which the reputed father was called on to help in the maintenance of the child, "the guidance of nature has been neglected ; the task of resistance has been thrown upon the man instead of the woman." Most moralists would say that the task of resistance to our passions is incumbent on both sexes ; and it sets our experience at defiance to tell us that in many of these cases the task of resistance is thrown upon the man.

The Commissioners had been justly disgusted with the abuses they had found : they were moved by an earnest desire to improve the habit of chastity among the labouring classes : they imagined that by inflicting upon women the heavy penalty of having to maintain their illegitimate children without the aid of the fathers, they would do away with the greater part of the mischief. There is no doubt that severe punishment, uniformly inflicted, produces great effects : if every man on uttering a profane oath had his tongue seared, swearing would nearly cease : if every lewd act were followed by a flogging, the chastity of the world would be much strengthened. But punishment which is too severe commonly defeats itself ; as in the case of capital punishment for forgery or horse-stealing or shop-lifting, where the injured person would not prosecute, or juries would not convict. In the present case there was no question of prosecutor or jury ; but the moral sense of the public was shocked, and there was an outcry

for a change in the new law. In fact, there was one fatal objection to the Commissioners' scheme: that objection was its manifest and crying injustice. A licentious man might artfully seduce a girl otherwise innocent, a man engaged to a young woman might take advantage of a momentary weakness, and the whole of the fatal effects would be thrown upon the woman: she, out of her small earnings, would be called upon to maintain the child; and in many cases nearly the whole of her wages would be thus swallowed up for perhaps ten years.

This new law was bitterly hated in Wales, where it might seem especially wanted, since the rate of illegitimacy is very high. The popular hostility exhibited itself when "Rebecca and her daughters" set about destroying tollgates, and otherwise redressing the wrongs of the poor.

"On all subjects, scarcely excepting the tolls on which the Commissioners were appealed to, none excited more soreness, none certainly elicited more unanimous condemnation, than the bastardy clauses of the Poor-Law Amendment Act. The injustice involved, as the popular notion conceives, in throwing the whole burthen of the consequences resulting from an act of joint criminality upon the weaker sex (for the remedy held out by law against the male offender proved a practical nullity), 'outraged,' says the Report, 'the moral feeling, and provoked the indignation of the people to a degree that can hardly be described.' 'Interdum vulgus rectum videt.'"

The draconian law was tried, it disgusted impartial persons, and though it was believed that under its action illegitimacy diminished, it was alleged that

infanticide increased. At any rate, the law was unjust, and it was altered: the reputed father is now called upon to pay for the maintenance of the child.

It must be confessed that in some cases, the determining who shall be reputed the father, is a problem of great difficulty: few other cases are so repulsive and so unsatisfactory as these disputes about paternity; and I have no doubt that many men pay for children not their own. The woman is required to produce evidence in support of her oath; but a man may have been guilty of a mere act of levity, and this in the sight of witnesses, and may for that very reason be pitched on as a victim. But as I have shown in my essay, "Injustice in Justice," false convictions are possible in much graver matters than this; and as we do not for that reason give up prosecuting offenders and even punishing them capitally, so we must not establish a bastardy law always unjust, under fear that otherwise we may occasionally commit injustice. When we are reminded of the few men who are humiliated and robbed by woman's perjury, we must remember the vastly greater number of men who under fear of the law are induced to arrange privately for the maintenance of their children.

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One great change for the better arose out of the Commissioners' Inquiry: the establishment of a central controlling power. I have already said that I am strongly favourable to local administration, but equally favourable to a central control: the combination of the two leaves room for free growth of the



social branches, while it lops off excrescences in one direction, and stimulates sluggishness in another. Under the old poor-law the administration of parishes was as various as the face of the country : in a few places there was kindness tempered by common sense, in some there was harshness and brutality, in many there was a timid yielding to the able-bodied and a neglect of the aged and impotent. At one time there was a workhouse test, at another, relief at home prevailed : farming the paupers spread widely but was abandoned for its cruelty. Every parish could take its own course, though for a considerable time the magistrates had had the power of ordering relief where the overseers apparently failed in their duty.

At present, no parish or union can make any important change without the consent of the Poor-Law Board, or rather the Local Government Board ; and if the parish or union incurs any expense in prosecuting a scheme not confirmed by the Board, the auditor of the accounts disallows the charge, and the guardians are called on individually to pay the amount.

Take an example. Some benevolent ladies have lately made strenuous efforts to introduce generally the scheme of boarding-out ; that is, of taking children from unions, and placing them with married couples who are willing to adopt them on receiving a small periodical allowance for their maintenance. This scheme has much to recommend it, but on the other hand, it is liable to gross abuse. It has much to recommend it ; for it removes the child from an artificial state of existence, too much like that of a

bird in an aviary, and restores it to the influences of family life, under which it has a chance of growing up into a trained adult acquainted with the business and the temptations of the world. The scheme is liable to gross abuses ; for as we know by the horrible revelations of baby-farming, there are persons so callous, so cruel, that for the sake of a trifling money advantage, they will take charge of the young and helpless, will neglect them and will squeeze an illicit profit out of their hunger and nakedness. The only way of safety lies in vigilant superintendence, readily exercised under the early zeal of beneficent projectors, probably neglected under more formal and colder conditions.

Under the old law every parish could adopt such a system at will, and in some cases did adopt it. To enthusiastic ladies, sure of their own zealous superintendence, and burning to do what under their care would be a certain good, the old local independence appears admirable, because it left benevolence unfettered. These ladies rebel against what they regard as the useless formalities of a board in London, more addicted to red tape than to active beneficence. But I believe these ladies are wrong : it seems to me a useful thing to call upon projectors to prove their case, to listen to objections, and above all, to invent every possible security against abuse. Just as in Parliament, it is advantageous to have a strong opposition bent on sifting every ministerial project, fastening on every weak point, and if often spoiling the symmetry of a measure, yet generally preventing mischievous extravagances, so in the administration of the poor-law it is advantageous to have a central



board, which while it sometimes offers undue resistance to proposed alterations, at any rate prevents the rash adoption of crude and imperfect projects.

I have given this boarding-out question merely as an illustration: I do not mean to represent such resistance as the only, or as the most important function of the board, which in fact has under its charge the whole poor-law administration of the country.

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In passing from the old law to the new, great difficulties had to be encountered. The old administration had been timid and lax: the new leant to the side of severity. Great suffering must have been inflicted on many persons; suffering of the same kind that attends a general dearth, or a war however just and necessary. Individual hardships stirred the anger of many kind-hearted persons; and for some years the *Times* in particular laboured against the new law, with a zeal and constancy which showed that in the mind of a leading proprietor there was a sincere conviction of the existence of needless harshness.

Strong language was used in speeches to constituents.<sup>(169)</sup> The Commissioners who at first had the direction, were called the "three bashaws of Somerset House," "heartless tyrants, unfeeling theorists, concentrated icicles." But the Commissioners confess that however harsh such terms were, they expressed the sincere convictions of the speakers, who really believed the law and its administration to be oppressive.



Many persons remember the case of the Andover union, which happened twenty-five years ago. We are briefly told in Irving's *Annals*, that on the 14th August, 1845, there was an end of the Poor-Law Commissioners' inquiry into the state of the Andover Workhouse, after a fortnight spent on it; that it was shown in the evidence, that the miserable inmates were in the habit of gnawing the bones given them to break up for manure; and that the Commissioners ordered *an indictment to be preferred* against the master and mistress.

One of the Commissioners<sup>(170)</sup> puts a different face on the matter. "Bone-breaking had thus for a considerable time been practised in the Andover union, without occasioning any complaint; but in 1845 a great sensation was created in consequence of the *disgustingly voracious* habits of the male inmates; and an appeal was made to parliament on the ground that the diet of the workhouse was insufficient, and that hunger, and not the depraved appetites of the men, had been the cause of what had occurred; notwithstanding the declaration of one of them that he *preferred the putrid marrow* obtained from these bones to anything else."

I know no reason why putrid marrow should not be as seductive as putrid cheese, putrid hare, or putrid venison. But the Commissioner should have explained why the master and mistress were ordered to be prosecuted. Perhaps this was the doing of the two other Commissioners, since we find that those two gentlemen, contrary to the wishes of our informant, "yielding to pressure, issued an order prohibiting the practice of bone-breaking in future."

This Andover case furnished the opponents of the new law with a pretext for getting a committee appointed by the House of Commons, to inquire into the administration generally. By evidence about bone-breaking and a thousand other matters, the opponents succeeded in creating a strong popular feeling against the Commissioners, who had devoted themselves to the performance of their duty, who must of necessity have done many things that looked harsh and caused much distress to individuals, and who probably were disposed to carry out as far as they dared, their original recommendation to refuse relief to the able-bodied at their own homes.

It was fortunate for the country that such an opposition sprung up, and caused a careful sifting of the orders and proceedings of the Commissioners: though it seemed hard upon these gentlemen that they should be called upon to explain every step they took, and though it was hard that their actions should be constantly misinterpreted. I say that the opposition was fortunate for the country, because while I appreciate the inestimable benefits conferred on the present generation by the reform of the poor-law, and by the zeal of the Commissioners in working it, I at the same time feel that there was danger of carrying the changes too far, of bearing hardly on the improvident, the weak, the destitute; and of causing among the unfortunate that recklessness which ruins them for ever, and which might have increased tenfold those vagrants who even now are a curse to the country. To the great advantage of all classes, the theories of reformers were tempered in action by the kindness and practical sense of or-

dinary men. Doctrinaires (or theorists) are admirable in suggestion, dangerous in uncontrolled action.

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The Commissioners were perhaps too much bent on reducing the rates, and too proud of their services in that direction. No doubt, heavy taxation is a serious evil: and though I sometimes feel that Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Lowe are too much bent on savings, to the neglect of important administrative functions, yet I more than half excuse them by the dictum attributed to M. Thiers, that finance ministers should be even ferociously parsimonious. Still, looking at the service to which the poor-rates are devoted, remembering that the destitution of six-sevenths of the nation is more or less relieved by them, I cannot greatly rejoice in an annual saving of two or three millions; that is, one penny a week taken from every man, woman, and child of the labouring classes; or if you please a reduction of the general and local taxes by a thirtieth or a fortieth part of their amount.

It was certainly hard upon the landlord, the clergyman, the farmers of Cholesbury, that their means of living disappeared; it was hard upon other parishes that three-fourths or half of their means of living disappeared: but all this was nothing when compared with the intolerable demoralization of the labourers. Still it is worth while to know how much the rates were diminished by the operation of the new law.



The money expended in relief was in 1834, £6,317,255

Under the new act, it was in 1835, 5,526,418

„ „ „ in 1836, 4,717,630

The reduction therefore, in the first year,

was . . . . . 790,837

In the second year . . . . . 808,788

In the two years together . . . . . 1,599,625

I fear that there must have been a good deal of pinching and struggling, on the part of those suddenly deprived of their usual resources: nor can I see much comfort in the optimist remark of our Commissioner,<sup>(171)</sup> that the money thus saved was left in the hands of employers of labour, who would be therefore *able* to pay better wages and to give more employment, as though masters would give better wages merely because they were able to do so.

Another part of the second year's report was more satisfactory; it stated that "in the rural districts, the labourers were become more orderly and industrious; that they were beginning to look to the master instead of the parish officer, and to feel that a good character was the best security for obtaining regular employment."

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On the whole, we have much reason for gratitude to the reform ministry, which even in the turmoil of something nearly approaching to a revolution, set about recasting the poor-laws.

I cannot say however, that under the control, at first of the Commissioners and afterwards of the Poor-Law Board, the administration has reached to anything like perfection. During the last few years

we have had some painful revelations of abuses still to be corrected. I will not say much of the continuance of vagrancy; for although the popular voice would tell us that there are scores or hundreds of thousands of habitual wanderers, we are told on authority that the casuals publicly relieved do not on an average exceed five thousand :<sup>(172)</sup> a number which might increase tenfold in the absence of a good poor-law. It has been found however, that in some of the workhouses the infirmaries are disgracefully bad, ill contrived, ill built, ill ventilated, ill kept; foul and fetid. We find guardians eating, drinking, and smoking at the expense of the rates :<sup>(173)</sup> inefficient pauper nurses or paid nurses of Mrs. Gamp's type, coming home drunk, and swearing at paupers too long about dying.

Unfortunately, the Poor-Law Board acts as if it were still under the perverse influence of those mistaken men who regard all public charity, perhaps all charity, as a mistake: the Board is too backward in acting: it assumes in the absence of proof to the contrary, that the guardians do right: while the inspectors of gaols, the inspectors of lunatic-asylums, the inspectors of industrial schools, insist on going to the bottom of the administration, the Poor-Law Board shuts its eyes to everything but questions of expense, on which it is often narrow and severe.

If the Board did its duty, it would insist on having relief placed within the reach of those who want it. Unfortunately this is not the case. An applicant often has to go miles to reach the relieving officer and the guardians, and the parish surgeon has to travel miles to reach his patients :<sup>(174)</sup> this too not

only in the case of scattered populations, but even in populous places. At the time I am writing this I see a complaint that in the case of a town of 20,000 inhabitants, the relieving officer lives seven miles from the place, and the surgeon four miles. A sufficiency of medical attendance also, ought to be given and paid for. The correspondent to whom I refer, comments on a recent case in Bethnal Green, that of a poor painter who died. The friends took to the surgery an order for medical attendance, and this order was marked "said to be urgent:" after four applications the assistant went, recommended castor-oil, but did not furnish it though the family could not buy it: before the medical man himself came, the patient was dead. It was urged in excuse that the medical man had forty-six pauper patients to visit that day and three cases of childbirth, besides his private practice.

We are painfully reminded of the gloomy picture I have before quoted from Crabbe. No doubt these negligences grew rankly under the old law, but we had hoped that the new administration had eradicated them.

At any rate the opponents of all public charity, can scarcely appeal to the present poor-law as they appealed to the old one, in proof that interference with the course of nature necessarily fosters the development of self-reliance and independence. We have got rid of the sturdy pauper who openly threatened the firm overseer, or who slunk about in the darkness to burn rick-yards: a young couple married on Wednesday will not get out-door relief on Saturday, but will be ordered into the house and



will be there separated: the vigorous labourer is no longer paid partly by the parish: superfluous hands are not billeted on the farmers; and one who has inherited or saved a little money, is not for that reason turned adrift: the rates do not rise to 10s., 20s., 40s. in the £., and no Cholesbury is thrown out of cultivation.

## VIII.

IN conversation with men eminently kind-hearted and qualified to judge of the question before us, I have found existing an opinion that the vagrancy which torments us, and the squalid town destitution which disgraces us, are results of our injudicious almsgiving, and especially of our mistaken public administration of relief. I have already shown at some length, that the former experience of Scotland and of Ireland, with parsimonious poor-law in the one, and no poor-law in the other, leads us to the opposite conclusion. I have incidentally remarked also, that what we know of foreign countries confirms our opinion in favour of public relief.

We have lately had a full account of what is done in Paris; and I think that an epitome of the information given, may be at once interesting and instructive. If we find in Paris the same folly, improvidence, impudent demands, imposture, squalor, that we find in London, we may come to suspect that such miseries are common to great towns, and are not the peculiar product of our unwisdom.

M. Maxime Du Camp is the author to whom I am indebted:<sup>(175)</sup> he gives in his first article, an account of Paris mendicity.

The French law recognizes the fact, that wherever there exists no provision for the relief of distress, begging is inevitable: but it declares that "everyone found asking alms in a place where a public mendicity-establishment exists, shall be punished with imprisonment for three to six months, and shall then be taken to the beggars' asylum." Such a law, says M. Du Camp, appears cruel; but it is not really so in the eyes of the experienced; who know that mendicity is generally a trade, with its prosperous or unfavourable chances, its failures, its dead seasons; a hazardous trade, which nearly always supplies a maintenance and sometimes means of debauchery.

The evil is nothing new in Paris; and was so notorious in former times, that its history is written in the public archives; in the decrees of parliament, in the ordinances of provosts, and in the edicts of kings. Indeed every English reader of Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame*, is familiar with the *Truands* and the *Cour des Miracles*; the miracle being that these impostors returning to their lair, blind, deaf, lame, dying, suddenly found themselves able to see, hear, run, and live jollily. Turned out of their old asylums one after another, these impostors and thieves have at last found a refuge in the *rue des Filles-Dieu*, and in front of the blind alley *la Grosse Tête*, so named for the last five hundred years. From the filth of the ground, the foul stream down the middle of the street, the habitations with their impudent vice, you might fancy yourself in the fifteenth century. Twenty years ago, these demi-savages had another refuge not far from the *place Cambrai*, opposite the *Collège de France*; it was the

Close of Saint-Jean-de-Latran; and it was officially said of it that it had the stamp of the former Cour des Miracles: it has now disappeared.

If we are to believe the accounts handed down to us, Paris two hundred and thirty years ago was a dangerous place to live in; for it is said that in three months there were killed in the streets during the night 372 persons, and 14 in one night.

We are not bound to credit Sauval, when he tells us that at that time there were more than forty thousand beggars in Paris; though we may trust him when he says that they were an independent race, ignorant of law, of religion, of superior, of police: the only things predominant among them being impiety, sensuality, and libertinage.

At last in 1656, decided measures were taken. M. de Believre, the First President of the Parliament, took the matter up, and an edict was issued creating the *hôpital-général* for the purpose of receiving confirmed paupers. To enforce the edict was not regarded as an easy task, and even caused some alarm; but in fact little difficulty arose. It was announced in all the churches that the *hôpital général* would be open to all comers, and the asking of alms was forbidden through the town-crier: a few days later, all beggars who showed themselves, were seized and locked up.

The proceedings seemed radical and complete. This appeared in the narrative of two young Dutchmen named Villers, of their stay in Paris during the two next years (1657, 1658): they gave an account of their visit "to the Petit Arsenal, which is used as a lock-up for wandering beggars;"



they went into raptures at the size of the cooking furnaces and the vastness of the inclosure; and they concluded that "it is the finest establishment that can be conceived," and that "it is wonderful to see Paris without a beggar instead of the swarms which formerly infested it."

Unfortunately, this reformation was only temporary: for Paris, like other capitals, is a place to which gravitate malefactors, vagabonds, and beggars; and empty it of them as you will, the artificial void is gradually filled up again. An eminent Inspector of English prisons, broached a whimsical opinion thirty years ago, that crime was an infectious disease, which might be finally got rid of if all criminals could be seized in one day and locked up out of sight: that then, crime ceasing to be propagated would cease to be; just like small-pox, which, as it is believed, will ultimately be extinguished. The segregation of criminals would certainly be difficult, and must take place over a wide area, since if it were effected in London only, the void would be filled up from the provinces; if in England only, from Ireland and Scotland; if in the three kingdoms only, from America, France, Germany, the whole world.

At any rate, the Paris experiment was unfavourable to this amusing theory. The streets were emptied of their vagabonds, but gradually they got filled again; and thirty years after the clearance, just when our James was giving three kingdoms in exchange for one mass, Paris was issuing an ordinance commanding all mendicants to depart under threat of being sent to the galleys. This went on

till public workshops were established, just as had been done in England a century before. The beggars' asylums, far from having been shut up, were crowded. Later still, under the perplexity caused by ever-increasing destitution, the government did what our Henry VIII<sup>(178)</sup> had done; it threatened a fine of 50 livres upon everyone giving alms to a beggar.

The evil was incurable. Under the Regency, the great projector Law, shipped off to Louisiana, all the young of both sexes, who were in safe keeping at *la Pitié, Bicêtre, la Salpêtrière, les Enfants Trouvés*: 500 were embarked from La Rochelle alone. All was in vain. A few years later the Duc de Bourbon gave orders to seize, lock up, and brand, all mendicants who had come in from the country. The controller-general, Dodun, wrote to the manager of the hospices, that the miserable inmates must be fed on bread and water, and bedded on straw, that they might take less room.

Under Louis XV the same inevitable destitution and vagabondage. Again was transportation resorted to. But as in all cases during that disorderly and unhappy reign, the seizure of the mendicants was abused, and was made to serve as a cloak for abduction: women servants were carried off from the streets; who shall say to what abominations? Young artisans disappeared. A horrible rumour was whispered and even spoken aloud: that the king, once the Bien-Aimé of his people, was now a disgusting leper, who could be cured only by a daily bath of young blood. After a serious riot, the proposed transportation was abandoned.



Thus matters went on till the revolution, which like all social cataclysms, gave a violent shock to the pursuits of industry and caused a vast increase in the number of the destitute. The violence of the changes, war with half the world, the accompanying dearth of food, while they drove throngs of men into the ranks of the army, left the old, the impotent, the women and the children, to beg or starve. So early as 1790, it was found needful to adopt strong measures: spinning-houses were decreed for women and children, public works were set on foot for the employment of men, the impotent and infirm were to be sent to hospitals, foreign beggars were to be banished: one other regulation (a law of settlement) was then made, and is still in force; it was enacted that all provincial beggars should be sent back to their place of birth, with an allowance of about a halfpenny for every mile they had to travel, and with a fixed route from which they were not to depart. We know too well, by Irish experience after 1846 and by French experience after 1848, how illusory and defective are all such measures in the face of famines and *chômages*. Time however, wore on; and the emaciated women, the pining children, drooped and died and were heard of no more.

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Let us come down to the present day. We shall find that mendicity and vagabondage are in Paris, just what they are in London. There as here, mendicity is a trade, and conceals itself under a thousand protean forms: it opens the doors of the fiacres, it sells flowers, matches, paper; it offers tobacco and



lights ; it picks up the ends of cigars, breaks them up and sells them at 9d. a pound to the wretched ; at the doors of churches it sells chaplets, and offers holy water, and at marriages or funerals, affects grimaces, smiles, or tears ; it solicits at the Opera, it grinds barrel-organs ; if endowed with blindness, it plays the accordion on the bridge, sings in the courts of houses, hires children to make them beg ; on Sundays and on holidays such as the 1st January, the 15th August, and Shrove Tuesday, it enjoys its Saturnalia, urgent, persistent, odious.

We sometimes imagine that we have a monopoly of old offenders, repeatedly punished in vain. Here is a Parisian example of a refugee from Baden. He enlisted as a foreigner in the Algerian army, and in a duel at Bona received the wound which caused his frightful limp : returning to Paris in 1838, he was condemned for robbery by false keys, but in a few months was pardoned : the next year he was again sentenced for thieving and dishonest pawning, but escaped with six months' imprisonment : in 1840 he was arrested as a street beggar, in 1841 as a suspected thief. After this he became more careful or more clever, for he retained his liberty for seven years (perhaps he was practising elsewhere) ; but in 1847 he was sent to the beggars'-asylum, where in nine months he amassed £2 and was discharged ; but then, meeting a woman with whom he had once cohabited, he beat and robbed her, and was banished from France. In 1852 he turned up again. He was taken to Boulogne with hopes that he would go to England ; but like a cat he found his way back to his old haunts, and finally gave up the

business of destitution. A tailor by trade, a good workman, with arms and hands uninjured, he had no just pretext for begging.

Mendicity then, is an incorrigible vice; or rather as a French employé said, it is a passion. One Parisian beggar of 25, has been convicted forty times: another complains of old age and incapacity for labour, and he turns out to be 47: a third is asked, You have had an affair? (that is a criminal sentence)—Only three or four times. A fourth, lame, squalid, with a restless eye, tangled beard, uncut hair just exhibiting a bulbous nose, and the hoarse voice of a dram-drinker, grunts out a yes to every question: he is married, has a family, has worn out hope and anxiety, is familiar with the police: he swears he is abstinent, he can live on a pennyworth of bread a day; but what an intolerable deal of sack he wants in addition, he says not.

There are men so brought up or so constituted, that sedentary industry is insupportable. The Red Indian is capable in war of intense application and self-sacrifice: in peace he cannot slave like a woman. Among ourselves there are youths of educated families, trained to industry from childhood, who sitting in study or office and seeing the sun shine and hearing the wind blow, are restless and melancholy as a caged robin: excellent soldiers or emigrants, they fail in quiet and monotonous occupations. Born in a lower grade, they might have been tramps and vagabonds.

Among Paris mendicants, many when locked up, are capable of industry for the purpose of recovering their liberty. A man who had gained in this way

£5 or £10, asked to be set free, and the officers let him go, knowing what would happen : three days afterwards he was caught begging and was brought back : he had spent his money on a great feast.

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Now let us see what are the asylums of which I have spoken, and how the inmates get there.

A person arrested for begging, suffers a short imprisonment. But when this is over, if he were at once turned out from *La Santé* or *Sainte-Pélagie*, without money or employment, he must needs return to the streets. The law therefore provides that he shall be sent to an institution where he will receive food, clothes, lodging, and fuel, on condition that he works ; and with the advantage of having part of his earnings set aside for him. The asylum is not a place of punishment, but a compulsory work-house, from which a man can escape by continued industry : the best possible cure, if beggars were not incurable.

One of these institutions is at Saint-Denis. In an ancient historical town, remarkable for its bad odours, by the side of the royal tombs, is situated this filthy building : so filthy that M. Du Camp declares it to surpass all that his large experience has elsewhere met with. Dilapidated, rotten, poisonous, it is fit only to be a hospital of a former *cour des miracles* : the rooms are hovels, the stairs are steep ladders, the passages are narrow and dark, the unpaved courts are dusty or muddy, the air is loaded with miasma and stench, the



throng of paupers elbow each other, the workshops are in freezing cellars without light, the whole place is a seed-bed of vice and disease.

When these wretched creatures are brought from Paris in prison-vans, they are shaved, bathed, and combed. They are set to work, and half their gains are set aside for them. The discipline is gentle, and severe punishment is seldom inflicted. When a man's accumulated earnings have reached a certain amount, he may demand his liberty : but when he leaves he knows well enough what will happen ; and instead of saying *adieu*, he says *au revoir*. One of the most objectionable practices of the place is the huddling together the various ages : you find youths of eighteen or twenty, who are petted and corrupted by the older sinners.

The female side is strictly separated from the male : but not without great difficulty ; for all kinds of tricks are played to get stolen interviews with these wrinkled and odious women. The oldest and most infirm are put together in small rooms, the stench of which is overpowering. In the midst of them are young children running about, who live and seem almost to thrive in the poisonous air.

Here again the discipline is mild ; and it is found that fair words go much further than threats. One of the attendants, active, intelligent, and even attractive, being asked to exhibit the punishment-cell, blushed, hesitated, and at last opening a door, showed the closet filled with lumber and evidently disused.

The asylum is too small, and the women have sometimes to sleep not two in a bed, but three in two small beds put side by side. The want of space

and the consequent crowding, prevent due superintendence and lead to all kinds of abuses. It is indeed high time to pull down this old house, which is so frail that an architect dare not sanction the introduction of gas or warming apparatus, lest the necessary disturbance of the walls should bring the building down.

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Let us now go to a more pleasing picture: that of Villers-Cotterets; the country seat of Philippe Égalité, to which he was relegated in 1766;<sup>(176A)</sup> now turned into an institution for the destitute. Strictly speaking, it is a beggars' asylum like the other; but the beggars here are of a less odious sort than the squalid outcasts of St. Denis; besides that many persons who have been convicted of crime and have no means of maintenance, are sent to Villers-Cotterets to relieve them from the necessity of criminal living.

This old château, is almost like a charitable asylum, in its internal neatness, and in the comparative liberty of its inmates. It retains its look of greatness, such as it had when Francis I erected it: its two towers, its lofty brick fireplaces, its grand staircase, its delicate sculptures, in which the emblematical salamander dares the powerless flames. The internal proportions indeed have been destroyed; the rooms have been divided and lowered, the beautiful chapel is used as a dormitory. A vast well, the wonder of the neighbourhood, furnishes water by the united and painful effort of ten old men working together.

The regulations are gentle: the old people can stroll about the surrounding fields, or sit in the sun

on benches against the walls. Work is provided and partly paid for; but it is not much insisted on; the inmates may be seen lounging about the courts, talking, reading, smoking; the principal employment is the very light one of scraping lint. Once a week, the men on Tuesday, the women on Wednesday, everyone has a holiday; and if, as often happens, there is an unsteadiness in the gait of the men when they come home, the superintendents shut their eyes. There is no fixed dress, and men are allowed to wear moustache or beard.

In one part, rigidly cut off from the rest, are the women, who occupy rooms still displaying fine gilt wood carvings, and commanding delightful country views. The management of the infirmary appears to be in striking contrast with that of some of our workhouse wards, where drunken nurses curse the paupers for being so long in dying. The sisters of *la Présentation* (de Tours) undertake it. A poor creature unable to move, cried out, "My sister, I cannot die, and that distresses me.—Pray to God, replied the sister.—Pray for me, He hears me not.—The sister knelt down and others followed."

Among the men lately was an author. He had formerly written a versified tragedy in five acts; nothing remarkable, but as good as many others. He presented it to the Odéon, but it was declined. He printed it, and this was his ruin. For having sent a copy to the French Academy, he received from the permanent secretary, what every author receives, a letter acknowledging the receipt of the play, and promising that it should be placed in the library of the Institute. The author was unhappily



convinced and still believes, that his work was placed in the archives of the Academy on account of its unusual merit. Upon this, he nourished projects of other poems, neglected his daily work, was overtaken by poverty, and as a favour was admitted into Villers-Cotterets. "Here," said he, "I am secure of a maintenance; I can now set to work."

Some may ask as to this liberally conducted asylum, whether it is not a little too attractive to the idle and careless outside.

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M. Du Camp has given us other studies on similar subjects, and particularly one on what may be called the poor-law of Paris.<sup>(177)</sup> He observes that great towns are always remarkable for wealth and poverty; and that though Paris has the poor comfort of not being so bad as London, yet Chamfort might even now repeat his saying: "Society is composed of two great classes; one which has more dinner than appetite, the other which has more appetite than dinner."

He adds that our cold climate is more exacting than the torrid East; where men eat little and drink more water than wine, need little clothing, and can sleep with the heavens for their canopy. In Europe, the blind drunkard, careless of the morrow, spends in a debauch the earnings of a week, and saves nothing for the household, for the children, for bad times, for sickness, for old age. *L'assistance publique* is instituted to save men from the consequences of these vices, as well as to aid those who by unusual misfortune or by the negligence of others

have fallen into destitution. Besides the motive common to all the rightminded, of sympathy with the necessitous, the government feels the dread of having in the filthy corners and alleys of the capital, hungry bellies, minds in despair, who see in pillage a relief from their cravings, and even in death a change almost for the better.

Under the old monarchy, largesses were distributed in a manner so contemptuous as to deprive them of the claim to be regarded as charity. Until the revolution of 1830, the days of rejoicing were fixed on for these degrading gifts. At a spot in the Champs-Élysées, on a great scaffolding, there were heaps of bread, saveloys, and sausages; and these were scattered among the crowd; which also struggled to approach with jugs and sponges a fountain running with wine. Gorged and drunken, some of these castaways were rescued from death by the gendarmes. Since 1830, this scene has disappeared; and instead of it, bread, wine, clothes, fuel, a little money, are distributed to the indigent.

There is no lack of almsgiving in Paris, whether by individuals or by religious societies: a fact familiar to all readers of French light literature.

*L'assistance publique* is nothing new: centuries back it was administered by the *Hôtel-Dieu*, under the superintendence of *Notre-Dame*: in 1505 however, it was entrusted to a lay commission of eight notables and magistrates, who forty years afterwards constituted the *bureau des pauvres* (the pauper office). Some years later, a compulsory contribution was required from the citizens; it being enacted that anyone who failed to subscribe to the fund, should

be mulcted to the extent of fourfold what he had been asked and had refused. The Parliament (the head courts of justice) enforced these requisitions, not only on laymen, but also on priests and religious communities. The administration, varied occasionally in its organization, was known in Paris as the *great office*, and appears to have been popular. At the revolution of '89 it disappeared, but was replaced by another.

Let us come to 1848. The Constitution of that year, to evade the dreaded "right to employment," laid down the maxim:—"Society will furnish aid to abandoned children, to the impotent, and to old people without resources or relatives who can help them." To carry this out, a wider institution became necessary; and in 1849 this was established by a law, which enacted the creation of a Superintending Council and a General Director, in whose hands are placed the whole administration of Parisian public charity.

This centralization we are told has been successful: it has done for Paris what London is said to want urgently; it has given unity and organization to a number of charities formerly independent and clashing, now working smoothly together. The Assistance Publique is a crowded, unresting administration; having under its direction 8 general hospitals, 7 special Parisian hospitals, 3 provincial ones for scrofulous children, 10 hospices, 3 maisons de retraite, 20 relieving officers, 57 charitable houses: it presides over outdoor relief: it superintends deserted children and lunatics: it employs more than 4,000 officers besides nearly 2,000 medical men. Everyone



who in this immense Paris suffers, hungers, is abandoned, sick, or indigent, comes and implores this great "sister of charity," who to the utmost of her strength, welcomes the miserable and dresses their wounds.

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The income spent is derived from various sources. Principal has been accumulated gradually for centuries; from gifts made by Louis VII, Philippe-Auguste, and 8,285 other benefactors, encouraged by indulgences from the Pope. Among the testators was a Canon, who left to the Hôtel-Dieu two houses, the revenue from which was to be spent on each anniversary of his death, in giving to the sick the food they longed for. Various privileges were granted, such as that of taking a basket of fish and of other commodities from carts arriving at the markets; and a more singular one of lending a sum of money at the usurious rate of 12 per cent. In 1789 the annual income was about £350,000. The revolution much diminished this amount. There are additions however, from many other sources: from burials, from the *monts-de-piété*, and as is well known, from the receipts at theatres, balls, and concerts. As these amounts are quite insufficient, the City of Paris adds nearly half a million sterling a year. In this and other ways, Parisian indigence is supposed to cost annually £1,600,000: and as the population of Paris is about one-twelfth part of that of England and Wales, we should spend in the same proportion, 19 millions £., instead of the 7 or 8 millions that we actually spend; though there is a great difference between the demands of a great

capital to which vice and misery flow, and the average of a country like ours, highly manufacturing indeed, but still largely agricultural. At any rate we see the error committed by those who imagine that the public relief of indigence is peculiar to England.

The paupers of Paris are not more numerous than we might have expected, taking into account the attractive liberality and gentleness with which they are treated. In England and Wales the ordinary number of paupers is under 1 in 20 of the population; that is, . . . . . less than 5 per cent.

In London about the same.

Paris in 1829, (with a population of

816,000) had . . .	$7\frac{1}{2}$	„
1838 . . . . .	$6\frac{1}{2}$	„
1847 . . . . .	7	„
1859 (after annexing the suburbs—1,600,000)	$5\frac{1}{2}$	„
1866 . . . . .	6	„

Paris is divided into arrondissements: these, for the purposes of relief, are subdivided each of them into 12 zones, with a relieving officer to every one; the Prefect of the Seine assigns medical men and midwives. The pauper makes his demand: he is visited by the officer, by a clerk or a charitable lady, by a medical man; and these reports are collated and presented to the committee which sits twice a month. If the evidence in his favour is conclusive, his name is put on a card, which is yellow if the relief is to be temporary, or green if it is to be annual.

According to the rules, temporary relief is limited to the wounded, the sick, the lying-in women, or the

indigent who have an infant to suckle, to deserted children, orphans under sixteen years, heads of families with three children under fourteen years, widows and widowers with two young children. These boundaries seem wide enough, yet even these are not rigorously observed, in cases of real destitution.

What is called annual relief is really permanent : it is conferred on the old and impotent.

Indigent old men of 70 to 79, receive 1s. a week.

„ „ from 79 to 82 . 1s. 7d. „

„ „ „ 82 to 84 . 2s. „

„ „ „ 84 upwards 2s. 5d. „

The blind, the paralytic, the epileptic, the cancer patients, receive 1s. to 2s. a week, besides bread, meat, and clothes. Some unfortunates excluded from the hospices through want of room, receive an asylum-allowance of about £8 a year for the women, and £10 for the men.

In addition to this organization, there are benevolent-offices, maintained partly by legacies, but principally by private subscriptions collected by agents and charitable ladies, upon the pressing request of the mayor of the arrondissement. The amount collected throughout Paris is inconsiderable ; only about £36,000 a year : unfortunately, it is greatest in the richest districts, that is where it is least wanted ; the small funds of the poorer districts however, are largely supplemented by the *assistance publique*.

The duty of the benevolent-office is that of giving temporary relief in pressing cases, of relieving the sick, of aiding decent mechanics out of work for a time : of relieving, in short, real and unquestionable want.



For those miserable persons aided by the *assistance publique* are so addicted to counterfeiting distress, that the officers require the greatest circumspection to avoid encouraging mere imposture. It often happens that when by importunity a man has extorted an order for bread, he sells the order and buys spirits with the money: that another who has squeezed out several orders for inferior meat, keeps them back, then takes them all at once to the butcher, gets a fine beefsteak and eats it at the tavern with an accompaniment of a bottle of wine. Such cases are so frequent that they attract little notice. There is no workhouse test in Paris.

But though there are not in Paris any workhouses used as tests of distress, there are numerous asylums for the miserable, and the more of them as the district is poorer. "They are managed by those admirable women whom you meet at the bedside of the sick and at the cradle of the orphan; whose hands dress every wound, and who seem a living elixir for all the unfortunate. The people who have long known and loved them, call them the *little sisters of the poor*, the *grey sisters*, the *sisters of the kitchen*; they belong to the congregation of the Lazarists, founded by Saint Vincent de Paul, and their true name is *Sisters of Charity*." These houses are kept wonderfully clean; for the Sisters take a pride in having their pans glittering and their floors slippery. Their well furnished linen chests are perfumed, not with lavender, but with iris-root. They need a large supply of linen; for they lend sheets and even shirts to the large class who want them: the sheets are exchanged once a month, and the shirts once a week,

except in the too frequent cases of their being stolen or pawned.

Each of these houses is used as an infirmary, where the appointed medical men see the sick persons entitled to relief. Here is abundant room for imposture. Drunkards at their wits' end, insist on having quinine, the bitterness of which they prefer to the insipidity of water, especially as it is prepared with common alcohol and wine. Nearly 8,000 gallons of this medicine have been given away in one year. Camphorated spirits too, are in great demand: impostors affect pains in the joints, and even bruise themselves severely, that they may get a draught of this detestable stuff; reminding one of Porson, who was known to drink such a preparation instead of gin, and of the former convicts in Australia, with whom camphine for lamps was never safe. Of 400 or 500 gallons of camphorated spirits distributed in a year at these infirmaries, only a small part is believed to be applied externally.

Of the applicants there are more women and children than men. One young woman was asked the questions:—How old are you?—Thirty-four.—You have other children?—I have ten others.—“*Que fait votre mari? Elle devint toute rouge, ses yeux se mouillèrent, et d'une voix à peine distincte elle répondit:—Des enfans!*”

We find among these miserable women the same characteristic that is observed among convicts: they never quite disregard their appearance. “They have nothing to eat, but they wear chignons:” till they reach sixty they buy pommade and crinolines. In their demands they are insatiable: they must have



sleeping-draughts; camomile for their poor stomachs; quinine to strengthen them: sugar for their coffee is hinted at but in vain, for to grant such a request would be ruin to the funds.

Many surgical appliances are furnished: spectacles, crutches, elastic stockings, and trusses.

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What I have hitherto described constitutes the ordinary relief: but there is also the extraordinary relief; which is supplied in the first place from the fund of £20,000 left in 1820 by the Baron de Montyon, who lived to be a very old man (having been born in 1733) and left a large fortune partly for the use of the poor, and partly for the encouragement of literature and science.

Sixty-two Relieving Officers are employed to visit applicants at their homes. Each officer has his own district, with which he has gradually become intimately acquainted: he is required to take a daily round, and has many visits of inquiry to pay before evening. He sees frightful misery, but he knows that much of it is simulated, and that what is real is generally caused by idleness, ungoverned appetites, and debauchery: he knows also, that relief given will be applied to new orgies. He has to report that though alms will be abused, they are really wanted: he has to confess that not one case in a thousand excites his sympathy. Surely a workhouse test would be singularly useful.

The worst parts of Paris are those lately included in the city: towards the *barrière d'Italie*, the *barrière de Fontainebleau*, the *boulevard d'Ivry*; the horrible



rue Harvey, which is little but a sewer lined with nameless dens; at the Butte-aux-Cailles, in streets never paved and still lighted with oil lamps on chains stretched from side to side, and which explain to an Englishman the revolutionary threat to hang a man "à la lanterne." Hovels of one story, dark rooms, wine-shops at every corner, organ-grinders surrounded by children nearly naked, cats, dogs, and fowls; such are the characteristics of the quarter.

A young woman wrote for assistance in her confinement. There she was, a girl under fifteen, with her lover an impudent lad of sixteen; and both were rag-pickers. There was an infant and there was want: that was enough to secure relief.

In the same hovel has long lived a wretch of some education, who extorts assistance by threatening to address the Emperor: he is half blind, half paralysed. Time was that he had a certain reputation as a musician: he taught the piano: he had a little fortune which he swallowed in drink: he married a rag-picker with four children. Though he had been convicted of theft, he impudently wrote to the *assistance publique*:—"Why do you keep me waiting? Do you imagine me born to ask alms?" Whenever his requests are refused he denounces the relieving officer: "he is a coarse wretch, who laughs at the poor, and loves to snatch the bread out of their mouths." He loves quotations, such as this from M. Guizot:—"Bad officers excite general discontent and ruin their governments": then he goes on:—"Justice, or the newspapers shall proclaim it." Notwithstanding such extravagance, this report was sent in:—"X is

arrogant, soured, and wishes ill to society; in spite of his offences some help may restore him to better sentiments." A workhouse test would be usefully applied to this man, who can earn 5s. to 7s. a day by his beautiful writing. One cannot but suspect that the administration is afraid of him, and gives relief as our overseers formerly gave it timidly to refractory subjects. It is confessed that in times of excitement, grants are made, to moderate the dangers caused among the indigent by declamations about the tyranny of capital and the slavery of the prolétaires.

In other cases there seems too much of the profusion occasionally practised under our old poor-law. A man with a family was living in furnished lodgings, and therefore at a ruinous expense: the *Assistance* took an *appartement* for him, paid the rent in advance, and furnished it at an expense of £12: within two months everything was sold off for £2, and this was spent in a single debauch.

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If I repeat the phrase, workhouse test, you may say that by applying it you may leave to perish some who would rather die than go into a workhouse: you may refer to the dismal cases happening constantly in London. Unfortunately, notwithstanding occasional profusion in relief, Paris too has its dismal cases.

For instance: a few years ago, a young man leaving a ballroom at daybreak, in crossing the rue du Cherche-Midi, saw a woman on her knees, fishing out of a heap of mud scraps of vegetables which

she greedily devoured: coming near her he was astonished to recognise a lady once very rich, who had received in her house the world of letters and fine arts; whose husband, an eminent publisher towards 1830, had wasted her fortune in speculations, had lived openly with a notorious mistress, and had died in an almshouse. The deserted wife, crazed by neglect and want, had formed the habit of daily prowling at daybreak about the streets to dispute the scraps with wandering dogs.

In another case, so lately as 1868, a woman of 35 to 40, lean, yellow, evidently in pain, offered to pawn some rags which were refused as of no value. Turning away she fell down insensible. She was carried to a hospital, but in two hours died, of sheer hunger.

England has no monopoly of real and incurable destitution: the Parisian readiness of relief reaches mostly the undeserving. M. Du Camp quotes aptly from the author of *Paul et Virginie*:—"Ah! que le bien est difficile à faire!"

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On the subject of unmarried mothers, crowds of whom are found in Paris, the *assistance publique* is gentle and pitiful. To get at the fathers is sometimes impossible; for the truth is expressed by the well known reply of one of these unfortunates:—"the father? C'est un monsieur que je ne connais pas." To leave such women and their children unaided is cruel and impolitic. It leads to infanticide, as was expressed in an answer given in court by a woman tried for that crime:—"Et de l'argent? L'infanticide, c'est l'économie des petits ménages."



In the year 1869, the *assistance publique* had 61,080 maternity applications from married and unmarried persons taken together : 17,855 were refused : 43,225 mothers were relieved. Two days are sufficient for the preliminary inquiries and formalities ; so that an application made on Monday, brings assistance on Wednesday. And there is no niggardliness in the treatment : it sometimes costs altogether £15, before the mother and child are left to take care of themselves.

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We hear in England that all laws of settlement ought to be annulled : France however, has found it necessary to establish such laws. "The law of 24 Vendémiaire an XI has successfully solved the question of settlement, that is, has determined on whom devolves the duty of relieving the needs of the indigent and the sick : but for this, the departments would disgorge all their paupers upon Paris." A five years' residence is required to give a title to relief. But in practice this is not insisted on : a life in danger, real distress, is not disregarded : a Bavarian family, after a residence of six weeks, has been assisted ; other foreigners are often helped to return to their homes.

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M. Du Camp believes that no country but France has made a system of public relief one of the capital branches of administration : he is evidently ignorant of the centuries of experiment by England : he is unaware that, not in the capital alone as in France,

but through the whole of the kingdom, we have established an administration as superior in principle to the improvident *assistance publique* of Paris, as the regular, uniform government of England is superior to the changeable, spasmodic government of France.

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We now come to the *Hospices*:<sup>(178)</sup> the last subject of the articles which I am abridging. It must be kept carefully in mind, that hospices are quite distinct from hospitals: that they are rather asylums for receiving the indigent than infirmaries for curing the sick. In one respect, the Paris hospices resemble our better almshouses: they give a habitation to many persons who have some very small means. "Between the indigent population of Paris and that which can provide its daily bread, there is a considerable number of persons who while possessing some resources, could not maintain themselves unless they found admission to certain houses set apart for their reception."

There are seven of these asylums dependent on the Parisian *Assistance Publique*: most of them formerly within the city, but now removed to spots outside the fortifications; a change favourable to the health of the inmates, and economical because avoiding the heavy octroi. The oldest, that of the *Petits-Ménages*, dates back to 1557. It was formerly used for epileptics and lunatics; but since 1801 it has been set apart for widows and widowers of sixty and upwards, who have kept house for ten years, and also for married couples whose united ages amount

to 130 years, and who have lived together fifteen years. In 1863 the asylum was removed to a large new building at Issy; and it is said to be a model institution. Every inmate has to provide a fixed amount of furniture: and also to pay a small sum for board and lodging; if using a dormitory £8 a year, if enjoying a separate bedroom £12 a year: but a sum of £50 or £70 is accepted as a composition for life. In 1869, the inmates were 1,281 in number; of ages from 60 to 95 years.

The asylum of Larochefoucauld at Montrouge, was founded in 1791, by a lady whose name it bears. Admission is confined generally to persons of 60: but it is extended to incurable cripples, not suffering from madness, epilepsy, or cancer. Each inmate has to pay £4 for furniture, and an annual sum of £10 to £12. The house contains about 220 inmates.

Besides these two asylums, there is the Reconnaissance at Garthes, founded by a machinist in 1833, for 200 to 300 smiths and founders, at least 60 years old, and never convicted of crime: no payment is required from them. There are the Chardon-Lagache at Auteuil: the Devillas, rue du Regard: the Saint-Michel at Saint-Mandé.

One asylum is well known for its comparative luxury: it has the comforts of a respectable boarding-house. Its very name, l'Institution Sainte-Périne, was so chosen as to avoid the notion of charity. Suggested a century ago by Chamousset, the author of the Paris district post office, it was carried out by Napoleon and Josephine at the instance of two speculators who intended to profit by it. The asylum



then, was placed at what had been the convent of Sainte-Périne, at Chaillot: no sooner was it opened than there flocked into it numbers of old persons ruined by the revolution, but who retained the means of making the annual payment. These unfortunates had hoped to live comfortably in this large building, surrounded by vast gardens: but such was the negligence or peculation of the managers, that the boarders would have suffered the extremity of famine, if the Emperor had not sent them from the Tuileries provisions ready cooked. Since that time, the hospice has been managed by the municipal authorities. It has been latterly removed to Auteuil. It has received from time to time, persons once of considerable importance.

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Such is the provision made in Paris for the reception of friendless old age. Young children also have been thought of.

We all know how much barbarity there has been in the world in the treatment of new born infants; how infanticide has been avowedly practised not only among the great nations of the East, but also among the most polished nations of antiquity. The infant ordered to be exposed, clandestinely saved by a mother's tenderness, in after years produced at the right moment to be reclaimed by the father, has ceased to be an available character for the dramatist, who must now construct his plot with the aid of the gipsy or the Irish foster-mother. *L'Homme Qui Rit* has reminded us of the fate awaiting some of these abandoned innocents in the Middle Ages, as in hard-hearted Rome, where there were found men

who deliberately mutilated the adopted infants to move the pity of the charitable.

It was a French custom it seems, some centuries ago, to expose young children at the doors of the churches, and to give them up to anyone who would take them; no questions being asked as to their destination, and no superintendence being exercised over their future career. At an early period some efforts were made to provide asylums for such infants. In 1536, Marguerite de Valois founded one for those exposed in the porch of Notre-Dame: the children were at first called the “*enfants-Dieu* ;” afterwards the “*enfants rouges*,” from the colour of their dress. In 1772, the name of the asylum ceased to be.

Other institutions were founded. One of these was in the *rue d’Enfer*; and to this place were sent not only the Parisian infants but also numbers from the provinces. It became a trade to collect these waifs and bring them to Paris: the infants were packed by threes in a stuffed box, with their heads outside; and as they were on the way to the *rue d’Enfer*, the boxes were naturally called *purgatoires*.

The various asylums, differ as they might in outside appearance, agreed pretty nearly in the high rate of mortality which prevailed. In 1797, of 3,716 infants, 3,108 died in their first year: that is . . . . . 836 in a thousand.

But at the same period, of chil-

dren sent to nurse in Nor-

mandy, there died . . . 933 „

At the present day, of pauper

children there die in the

Seine-Inférieure . . . 870 „

And in the Loire-Inférieure . 900 in a thousand.

For the sake of comparison, I

will mention that of the male

children in England among

all classes, the deaths in the

first year are . . . 161 „

In Liverpool parish they are . 240 „

To avoid these disastrous results, the foundling infants are now sent into the country to be nursed. But for the rapacity of some of the adoptive mothers and the stupidity of others, this system would be perfect. However, the mortality has greatly diminished, and if one may believe the returns, is absolutely very low.

In the year 1869, the number of infants received was 6,009: but of these, the number placed for a time only, while the parents were in a hospital or in a prison, was . . . 1,749  
leaving as permanently abandoned . . . 4,260

As regards the mode of reception, there prevailed formerly Saint Vincent de Paul's maxim; that Charity should open her arms and shut her eyes: near the door of the Asylum there was a revolving tower in which the child was placed; a bell was rung, and an assistant came and took the child without questioning or even seeing the mother. The tower still exists, but is not used, though there are those who regret it, and believe that it often prevented infanticide.

As certain formalities are now observed, the authorities are able to record from what quarters of Paris the deserted children come: they find that it is not the decent citizens, nor the richer and showier quarters of the town, which fill the asylum; it is



the poorer and less creditable districts which furnish the supply. In fact, the motive generally assigned is poverty; sometimes the death of the mother; occasionally her illness or disappearance.

Few mothers willingly abandon their infants. M. Du Camp was present at one such sacrifice. The girl was under twenty, and moderately handsome. She had in her arms her baby of about ten days old, smartly dressed; and she sobbed as she said, "here is my little girl, I can't maintain her, so I bring her to you." She roughly wiped away her tears and sobbed again. "Why do you abandon the child?—I only get ten pence a day and I can't feed it." The child cried, and as the mother soothed her, the officer saw that she was accustomed to nursing. "You have other children?—Yes, sir, I have a little boy at home.—And the father?—(After some hesitation) A soldier." Then came the formal questions: name, address, age, baptised or not. "You know that you can hear of the child only once in three months, and that you will never know where she is?" She stooped, sobbed bitterly, and set herself as to bear an overpowering weight. An attendant came to carry the child away, but the mother embraced it hysterically. "Now," said the officer coolly, "if it is so painful to give the child up, why not keep it?" She jumped up and rushed out of the door. "It is always the same," said the officer.

Many of the infants are brought by midwives, some are found exposed and are brought by the police: others are sent from the prisons and the hospitals to be kept till their parents can claim them, and these latter too often remain permanently. For-

merly, the children of both sexes wore peculiar earrings, but the mark for life in the lobes of the ears was found objectionable, and the practice is now abandoned.

I have already said that the children are sent into the country to be brought up. The women who undertake the care of them, are sent to Paris, and remain there for a time, after which they return to their own provinces, each with the nursling she has taken in charge. They receive

during the first year.	. . .	3s.	a week.	} Besides clothes.
„ „ second year	. . .	2s. 6d.	„	
„ „ third and fourth years		1s. 7d.	„	
„ „ fifth and sixth years		1s. 5d.	„	
afterwards till the twelfth year	. . .	1s. 2d.	„	

After this age, the child is supposed capable of earning a livelihood. The adoptive parents are bound to send the children to school, but French peasants are not as yet enthusiasts in the cause of education.

Some of the children turn out unmanageable: more of them no doubt, than there would be among an equal number enjoying the natural advantages of parental affection. To employ and tame these refractory ones, agricultural colonies have been founded; and with results as unfavourable as those of similar colonies in other countries. In 1850, a Jesuit, père Brunauld, founded a colony in Algeria. The children first tried were not vicious ones; and of 200 sent, half were foundlings and the other half drawn from among the Parisian poor. “*Tout nouveau, tout beau.*” “*Novelty for ever! Nothing like Jesuits for education!*” But at the end of four years there were bad reports; and after three

years more the experiment was at an end. Père Brunauld acted frankly. In his report to the Emperor, he said: "The regulations are too harassing: after a certain age the pupils want more liberty and opportunity for individual action. We are disappointed too, to find that children collected together cannot maintain themselves by field labour."

The bad children were sent to other colonies: at Varègues in the Dordogne; at Montagny near Châlon-sur-Saône; at Blanzay in the Saône-et-Loire; at Les Bradières in Vienne. They were harshly managed: they ran away in great numbers, and some found their way back to the Paris asylum, hoping for kinder treatment and better feeding. On inquiry it was found that at Les Bradières the children slept on straw winter and summer, in wooden sheds with shutters but no windows, always superintended by a person armed with a long stick. One of the directors was asked what was the result of his system of education: he replied:—there is only one result, and that is, running away. Mettray was thought of, but there were difficulties.

The only institution which has succeeded is the Arras one, where the children are lodged and boarded, and during the daytime are sent out as apprentices to the artisans. This example, and the agricultural failures, may instruct us in the management of our reformatories and industrial schools. Many of these are placed in the country, and the boys are employed on a farm. At first sight this arrangement seems admirable; favourable to health and to employment and therefore to habits of industry: while on the contrary, a town school looks dismal, has a difficulty



in finding employment, and keeps the inmates within sight of old companions and early associations.

But I believe that this superficial view is incomplete or false. Even the eminent director of Mettray, M. de Metz, declares, according to M. du Camp,<sup>(179)</sup> that an agricultural school produces no satisfactory results, unless the boys on leaving are made soldiers or sailors. It is that phrase, "on leaving," which contains the gist of the question. What is to become of the boys on leaving? A few may get employment as farm labourers: and the rest? Now our Industrial School Acts lessen this difficulty for town schools: they allow the managers after having had a boy in custody eighteen months, to send him out in the daytime to work: boys are in fact thus sent out and earn wages. After a probation of this kind during a couple of years, the boy has become accustomed to many of the temptations which will afterwards assail him: he has a trade in his fingers: he has a good chance of regular employment; and he has habits of regular industry. His prospects are far better than those of the boys discharged from the agricultural school, who for the most part will come to the towns in search of employment which they may have difficulty in finding.

The authorities of the *assistance publique* had at one period an intention of establishing an agricultural penitentiary of its own: the experience of other attempts has postponed this project. It is now maintained that the best system for the children generally, is to leave them with their nurses, who often take to them as their own; sometimes adopt them legally, buy them off from the conscription, and

get them suitably married. The English partisans of the boarding-out system, may take courage from these facts, though they should not shut their eyes to the necessity of a most elaborate and vigilant supervision.

Some of these foundlings attain to success and wealth. Many volunteer as soldiers; a fact not indicative of domestic happiness. In many cases, where the abandonment has been caused by the indigence of the parents, the children are reclaimed: this was done in no less than 585 cases in the one year 1869; in 343 of them by the mother, in 166 by the father, and in 76 by other relatives: in 513 when the children were still under 12 years, and in 72 when they were from 12 to 21 years old. Of all these, only 219 were legitimate, but most of the others were formally acknowledged. These numbers seem considerable; but they are as nothing when compared with the entire number of children received.

If we are impressed with the advantage of this foundling system in removing the temptations to infanticide, we must on the other hand ask ourselves whether it is not a national misfortune, to have so large a proportion of children brought up without the developing and restraining influences of home life. If all these foundlings were illegitimate, we might believe that they would have at least as good a chance of happiness and well being under the care of the administration, as they would have in the negligent hands of their mothers or of the nurses to whom they would be entrusted. But the infants annually abandoned, are not all illegitimate.

It happens sometimes that a couple desiring to adopt a child, find one among these abandoned infants: the incident however, is commoner in novels than in real life. Such adopted children are now always taken from among the orphans, to avoid extortion on the part of the real parents.

Such is the great foundling-hospital system of Paris, which costs the administration about £150,000 a year; no very large sum: but which perhaps costs the nation vastly more, in its demoralizing effects on the parents and on the abandoned children.

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Besides the institutions I have described after M. Du Camp, Paris has provision for the maintenance of the old, the infirm, and other helpless persons.<sup>(180)</sup>

Bicêtre, for example, is devoted to this good work. It is situated outside Paris, and was once a grand château, the property of the Bishop of Winchester. The name was afterwards one of horror; for part of the great building was used for the detention of men condemned to the galleys or the scaffold: and the dungeons still existing, are described as worse if possible than the infamous *pozzi* of Venice. It is related of Du Chatelet, who was confined there forty-three years, loaded with four chains spiked to the walls, that to escape for a brief time from the infected atmosphere, and to enjoy a "débauche de grand air," he counterfeited death, and was carried out for burial. During "the Terror," the assassins visited Bicêtre; and far from setting the prisoners free, treated them as if they were their political enemies: they killed



the criminals, and going on to other parts of the building, killed the impotent and even the idiot children: "*ces petits-la,*" they said, "*c'est plus dur à abattre que des hommes.*"

At present, Bicêtre is a place of charity; an asylum open to the old, the infirm, the lunatic, the idiots, the epileptic. The old are refused until they have attained seventy years: many of them are old veterans, never weary of talking of their battles, and especially of their last battle, Waterloo.

Bicêtre confirms our experience of such asylums: it is not a place of happiness. Years and infirmities have left these men little gentleness: going on crutches they dispute, insult each other, fight impotently: they systematically oppose all regulations: soured and ungrateful, they forget the kindness they receive, and rebel against nature and fortune.

Among the inmates you find men who have been artists, authors, professors, inventors, traders, government functionaries, fallen by improvidence or ill fortune. Such men are of all the most to be pitied; yet in truth it is they who exhibit the most resignation.

Certain English reformers, who open their eyes wide to the faults of their own country, but shut them close to the faults of other countries, will be provoked at hearing that the crying vice of Bicêtre, as at Villers-Cotterets, is drunkenness. The old men go out if they please, every Sunday and Thursday; and return by nine o'clock, with cap awry, tottering, hiccupping, singing obscene songs. Gross cases are punished, but reformation is past hoping for. Disgusting as are these habits, they actually have their

good side: for the liquors the men love must be paid for, and the price has to be earned by work; and to gain this price of debauch the old fellows bestir themselves, and are kept from sinking into apathy. Repulsive as drunkenness is, it is perhaps not more demoralizing than indolence; and I am convinced that an alternation of active work and drinking is more favourable to happiness, than idleness and sobriety.

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I need not dwell on the other classes of misfortune treated at Bicêtre: on the epileptic, the idiots, the lunatics, shut up there and carefully treated according to the humane notions of modern times.

I will only just mention another great establishment of the same kind: the Salpêtrière, situated opposite the Jardin des Plantes; an ancient building with an octagonal dome to the chapel, built in 1669.

La Salpêtrière is for old women, what Bicêtre is for old men. In the last century it was used as a female asylum, but was not confined to the old. You saw there "women, pregnant girls, nurses with infants, boys from seven or eight months to four or five years, girls of all ages, old men and women, madmen, idiots, the epileptic, the paralytic, the diseased, the incurable;" besides those awaiting the miraculous touch of the king. In 1802, this confusion was put an end to, by sending to other asylums all but the old or indigent women, to whom it has since been principally devoted. Certain parts however, are still used for epileptics and lunatics.

La Salpêtrière is a vast place, covering about 70

acres with 45 buildings and 4,682 windows. At Christmas, 1869, it had a population of 1,551 souls. In other asylums, the porter sells the authorized commodities to the inmates: here there is a regular market for fruits and groceries, besides a café and a tobacconist's shop. Four or five old women, gravely smoking, rise and give you a military salute: they were once *vivandières*. The washerwoman's shop is in great request; for you find here the same attention to personal appearance that I noticed at Villers-Cotterets: a passion far preferable to that of the old men for drink.

This personal vanity is excited by the desire which these withered creatures feel for the attentions of the sapless old men, who come to visit them on holidays and wile away their small earnings. The women among themselves are as quarrelsome as the other sex: they scold, insult each other, and tear caps and hair. On their first arrival they commonly swear eternal friendship like young girls; but in a few days their confidence and their mutual confessions are abused and turned into reproaches. Many of the inmates have had an infamous notoriety in their youth; but now their beauty is turned into ugliness, and their impudence alone distinguishes them.

According to M. Du Camp, the nurses and attendants here as at St. Denis, are gentle and considerate. Many of them are of good families, have been brought up at the imperial institute of St. Denis, and say proudly that they are daughters of the Legion of Honour. Their highest salary is £20 a year, and they all wear the same costume.

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We see then, that Paris is abundantly provided with means of relief for penury. M. Du Camp's sketches may shame us out of one of our disgraceful prejudices: they may correct our false and offensive opinion that the English have a monopoly of beneficence. After reading M. Du Camp, we shall the more readily believe what we are told of the conduct of Paris during the late tedious and ruinous siege.

"The <sup>(181)</sup>charity of Paris," says the correspondent of the *Daily News*, "is boundless. I had no idea till this winter what a kind-hearted people these French are. We have an idea in England that they are frivolous and heartless, and that their kindly manners do not reach below the surface. You should see their self-sacrifice—their almsgiving—their good-heartedness—their boundless liberality. The misery of the poor is very great; but it brings out all the finer qualities of the French nature, showing how those who have nothing can endure with heroism, and how those who have to spare will give what they have most generously."

At Saint-Denis is the filthy and disorderly abode of captured beggars, who are kept there pell-mell in a state of squalor and filth disgusting to lookers-on, but possibly more pleasing to the inmates than order and cleanliness.

In contrast with this tumble-down place is the fine old château of Villers-Cotterets, where vice, impotence and misery, find a shelter, perhaps too attractive to the world of vice and folly outside.

Then you have a system of out-door relief, protected by no workhouse test, and therefore liable to gross abuses: tickets for bread exchanged for a dram;

tickets for inferior meat accumulated and made to purchase a beef steak and a bottle of wine: young girls and their paramours assisted liberally: fallen men allowed to extort aid by threats: the abuses of our old poor-law.

Besides this there is a great foundling-hospital system, the infants being received in Paris but sent into the country to nurse: a vast administration for legitimate as well as illegitimate children.

For the old and the helpless, there are two great asylums: the one for men at Bicêtre: the other for women at la Salpêtrière. In both these the inmates are well cared for, are even indulgently treated; but the men are drunkards, the women are frivolous; and both sexes are unhappy, querulous, and quarrelsome.

These institutions belong to Paris alone. In the country generally the public relief is small; here and there it is represented as considerable, possibly through a confusion of the nominal amount with the real amount expended; for just as in England, of the sums collected as poor-rate three or four millions are applied to purposes other than relief, so in France a large sum raised as *octroi* for charity, has been diverted to other purposes.<sup>(182)</sup>

A recent article complains of the want of such institutions in France generally. "Against destitution, we should like to see two remedies. The first is the establishment by the state, by the departments, by the communes, of asylums large enough to receive the sick and the aged: a duty incumbent on civilized nations. . . . We hear a great deal of the desertion of the rural districts, and of the growing

scarcity of labour. We are bound to say that it is not merely an inordinate ambition or distempered passion for luxury that carries the farm labourer to great towns; it is the insufficiency of the wages he receives."

We have abundant proof of the wretched condition of the French labourer. Besides other testimony we have that of Mr. Howard,<sup>(1824)</sup> the member for Bedford. He says that in many parts of France the labourers lead a hard life. The wagoners sleep in the cowhouse or stable, in a sort of stall and on a mattress laid upon the ground. Till this time he had never seen anything so much like slavery. He arrived at a farm at daybreak: all hands were at work; and this work which begins at four in the morning goes on till eight in the evening. Even on Sundays, the men labour, French fashion, till noon. The wages for these long days are 1s. 7d., and they are lower in neighbouring places. Such indeed, is the condition of the greatest part of France. Naturally, these badly lodged and overworked and ill paid men, swarm to the towns.

Then as to the peasant proprietors, whose condition our rural population are told to envy, Mr. Howard draws a dismal picture. He saw shreds of land, not to be called fields, cultivated with great difficulty: poverty in the implements; an ox, a horse, and an ass harnessed together; the peasants working double tides, sober, penurious, grudging every sou they had gained, and leading such a life as would be scorned by our farm labourers.

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If Paris is profuse, the country is parsimonious. Observe too, that the absence of legal assistance to the destitute, has not in France, raised the rate of wages to a reasonable level, nor has it taught the labouring people to make a sufficient provision against sickness and old age.

Injudiciously as much of the Paris work is done, encouraging as it does gross improvidence, demoralizing and destructive of family life as is the founding hospital system, yet we must concede that there is no want of kindness, gentleness, generosity. But it is a strange conclusion to which M. Du Camp comes,<sup>(183)</sup> when he says that he scarcely knows any other country which treats public charity as one of the most important wheels of its administrative mechanism : such an assertion exhibits strange ignorance of the three hundred years of English labours and anxieties in the same cause.

#### IX.

**B**EFORE I began to write this essay, I went through the materials which I had long been accumulating, and I selected such as I thought fit for my purpose of explanation and defence. I will now, at the risk of tediousness, recapitulate what I have written : giving fair warning that this Section contains nothing new, but is only an epitome of the previous pages.

In the first Section I pointed out that the relief of distress has been everywhere accounted a duty ; but that the abolition of slavery, by raising the most numerous classes to the rank of citizens, had vastly

widened the legal demands for charity; while the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church strengthened and corrupted the practice of alms-giving, by representing it as a means of salvation to the giver. I protested against the recent notion, (the spurious product, as I believe, of the uncorrected abuses of endowments and of some voluntary institutions) that all public relief, perhaps all private relief, is a mistake. I maintained further, that if the assistance of the indigent were left to private effort, acting either individually or in coöperation, it would be often insufficient and sometimes utterly wanting, while the cost would fall on a comparatively few persons.

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The second Section shows how, notwithstanding these obvious truths, the English poor-law has been denounced. David Hume, a Scotchman personally ignorant of the question, put on one level the parish rates, the gratuitous distribution of corn among the Roman citizens, and the doles issued by the patricians to their clients. Arthur Young declared that the system created the poverty it afterwards relieved. The sagacious Adam Smith condemned in the strongest terms, the law of settlement, as perhaps the greatest disorder in the police of England. Malthus however, surpassed all these in the vigour of his denunciation. Population tended to increase faster than food: population must be kept down: it could be kept down only by misery or vice; and to relieve misery caused by excess of numbers, was labouring to fill a bottomless vessel, and was running counter to the laws of nature. To give a right to

public relief was such an aggravation of inevitable ills, that it was just as foolish as it would be to deliberately narrow our streets, crowd our houses, or encourage the plague.

In later years, Chalmers, while labouring indefatigably in the exercise of private beneficence, emulated Malthus in the condemnation of legal relief; which, as he held, gave to the indigent man a loaf snatched from another on the verge of indigence; and also deadened the charity of relatives, of neighbours, and of the affluent. The pure political economists too, speak out in the plainest way. The French Dictionnaire says that Economists reject legal charity as producing incomparably more harm than good: that they condemn state intervention in the exercise of charity, just as they condemn it in the promotion of education, in the service of religious worship, and in the labours of industry. Ricardo also, declared that the direct tendency of the poor-law was not to make the poor richer, but to make the rich poorer, and to swallow up such of the net revenue of the country as the payment of taxes spared. Lacon summed up these opinions as to poor-laws by saying that they operate as a bounty upon idleness, and a drawback upon exertion; taking from independence its proper pride, and from mendicity its salutary shame; and depriving foresight and prudence of their due reward.

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The third Section exhibits the reverse of the medal. It shows how far from luxury was at that time the condition of the pauper: it quotes from Crabbe a



description of the workhouse, with the walls of mud, the putrid vapours, the negligent doctor, the irreverent priest, the unwedded mother, the heart-broken widow, the neglected orphan. We see even Malthus qualifying his denunciations, by admitting that the caprice and brutality of overseers, together with the self-respect of the labourers, had restrained many from marrying imprudently, and that on the whole the marriage-rate was low, and the condition of the poor was better than that of other European countries. Arthur Young too, after his unmeasured censures of poor-laws, is found eulogizing an experiment at Hamburgh, where in the absence of any organization for legal relief there were found no less than 8 to 9 per cent. of paupers, and where a subsequent experience of six years' organization had proved the importance of the experiment.

Such were the concessions of well-known opponents. But Mr. Ruggles, an eminent student of social science, went further: he maintained the absolute desirability and necessity of legal relief; and declared that the evil lay, not in the laws themselves, but in the imperfect execution of them. Jeremy Bentham too, the most independent of thinkers, who scoffed at De Lolme and Blackstone and the British Constitution, said plainly that the treasure of the comparatively rich is an insurance-office to the comparatively indigent. His able supporter Francis Place, who had long worked with his own hands, and who was an unhesitating believer in Malthus's main doctrine, maintained that the poor, when out of work, had a right to the means of living, and that to deny that right hardened the hearts of the rich: he ridiculed

Malthus's dogma, as to its being an immoral act to marry without something like a certainty of being able to maintain a family; he showed that no labourer and few artisans could marry at all on such conditions.

More recently, the Registrar General has proved how exaggerated are the statements of foreign writers, and how uncalled for is M. Louis Blanc's denunciation of our poor-law relief as a colossal extravagance. Mr. Macleod again, in his *Dictionary of Political Economy*, declares that it was our poor-law which during our wars with Napoleon saved us from jacquerie and revolution.

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The fourth Section endeavours to decide between these conflicting opinions by appealing to facts. It first goes to Scotland, and inquires what was the condition of its poor before the new law of 1845. In those earlier days the relief fund was principally derived from church collections, but in some places was supplemented by donations and mortifications. There existed also a legal power of levying a rate, and in towns this power was exercised. The relief given however, was "in all cases remarkably moderate," and quite free from that profusion charged against the English practice. The Scotch have always denied the able bodied a *right* to assistance.

Some examples will show how this penurious system worked. In 1783 there was severe distress in the Highlands, the harvest season the year before having been cold and late, and followed by early frost and snow. Notwithstanding the foresight and prudence

alleged to be produced by throwing men on their own resources, there were numerous deaths in several counties from absolute famine: decent farmers with their wives and children were begging in the streets. In 1819, the town of Paisley shared the general distress existing through Great Britain, and was suffering even more than the rest of the kingdom: the workmen unemployed and unfed, applied for public assistance, but were refused on the ground that "they did not fall within the class of poor for which the law was provided:" the Sheriff interfered in their behalf, but the supreme court decided against him and them, and left them to private charity or starvation: begging at the same time was forbidden.

Here was a fine training in foresight and prudence: let us see the results. Twenty years later, in 1840 to 1842, Paisley was again stricken with a cessation of trade: whatever foresight and prudence had been generated and cultivated in the minds of the artisans, these were insufficient for the emergency: and so terrible was the distress that collections were made through Scotland and even England, while the government sent Mr. Twisleton to assist in distributing the funds. These destitute persons had not been corrupted by legal relief on any occasion, and very little by public subscriptions among their immediate neighbours. Notwithstanding this severe discipline, tending to develop self-help, there was in fact the most dire distress: hundreds of houses without chair or table, bed or bed-clothes: men, women, and children pining for food.

This frequent and unrelieved misery, this abominable contrast between superfluities and luxuries



among the rich and utter destitution among the poor, would be a severe price to pay for the independence of mind produced by wholesome neglect. Before we consented to pay so extravagant a price, we ought to clearly ascertain that we really got in return the independence of mind contracted for. Now is it found that working men left to their own resources do acquire this much desiderated self-reliance? The Scotch are a sturdy, vigorous race; and if anywhere, among them especially we might expect to meet with this quality.

We have evidence, precise and conclusive. "The people are depressed in manner, speaking despondingly of the future, and with the *spirit of independence seemingly quite broken down*. The character of the weavers, particularly *that of the rising generation*, is much deteriorated. Under the influence of long-continued privations, men lose self-respect, and become desponding and reckless."

It appears that in Paisley at least, we did not get that self-help which was contracted for in return for the price paid: the price of closing our ears to the cries of the starving.

Two indictments have been preferred against the English Poor-Laws: that they cause an undue increase of population; and that they lower the rate of wages.

First, as to population. From 1801 to 1841, Scotland gave little legal relief: its decennial rate of increase varied from . . . 11 to 16 per cent.

Between 1841 and 1851, the legal

relief was augmented: the de-

cennial rate of increase fell to 9½                    „

Between 1851 and 1861, the legal relief was liberal: the decennial rate of increase fell to . . . 7 or 8 per cent.

According to the theorists, the rate of increase should have been higher as legal relief increased: according to the facts, the rate of increase was lower as legal relief increased. I do not pretend that the increased legal relief caused the diminution in the rate of increase: I only point out that it did not cause an increase in that rate, and that it did not check the current of diminution.

Now as to wages. A hundred years ago, Scotland, with scanty legal relief, had a rate of wages lower by a third than the rate prevailing in England which had comparatively profuse legal relief. Scotland too, which has now a system of legal relief approaching in cost to that of England, has found its rate of wages rise to about that of England. A rise of wages therefore, if not caused by liberal relief, is at all events not incompatible with it.

Another objection sometimes heard, is that the giving alms as a right, dries up the springs of private charity. Now England is the country in which alms have been given as a right for 300 years: but it cannot be said that the springs of private charity have been dried up among us. We have indeed no monopoly of kind consideration for the poor, whatever some narrow-minded persons may think: Roman Catholic countries surpass us in that best of charities, which consists in the giving up of a life on the part of educated women to the superintendence of asylums and hospitals. But our worst enemies will not pretend that in other noble works of charity we are

behind other nations. The poor-law after centuries of trial, has not been found to harden our hearts.

The lessons then, to be drawn from Scottish history are:—1; that the Scotch, living under a penurious poor-law, did not learn, whether in the Highlands or Paisley, to make provision against times of severe and protracted distress; but notwithstanding repeated warnings, married and brought families into the world, and on every occasion of failure of harvest or commercial crisis, were driven into the depths of distress:

2; that the minds of the Scottish working classes, instead of being braced up and rendered independent by adversity, were relaxed and beaten down; so that men and women, old and young, became desponding, hopeless, reckless:

3; that mendicancy, though sometimes forbidden, was frequently tolerated and even permitted, as a means of eking out the insufficient dole of the parish authorities:

4; that comparing the English working classes, living under liberal public relief, with the Scottish, living under meagre public relief, the English were in a far better condition, and this notwithstanding the superior intelligence of the Scotch:

5; that the Census does not confirm the opinion of the theorists who maintain that a liberal system of relief causes an undue increase of population; for that the rate of increase of population has decidedly fallen in Scotland since a liberal poor-law has been introduced:

6; that facts are also against the opinion that a liberal system of relief causes a fall in the rate of



wages; since it turns out that Scottish country wages, which in the last century were a third lower than English, have now, in despite of poor-laws and theorists, risen to at least the English level:

7; that private charity, which according to the theorists ought to be dried up by a system of legal relief, has not been dried up in England by 300 years' prevalence of such a system; and as far as we see, was as overflowing in England thirty years ago, as it was in Scotland, which at that time gave little legal relief.

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I have recapitulated these Scottish facts at considerable length, because they seem to me to teach the true doctrine of the necessity of formal legal relief. I retrace the Irish history less fully.

Beginning with a hundred years ago, we know from Arthur Young, that about that time, many of the peasants under the cottier system, kept a cow and had the enjoyment of its milk, besides a potato ground, and sixpence a day for wages when they were employed: we know also that, except in the years (too frequent) of famine or dearth, the cabins though constructed of only sticks and turf with a day's labour, and though possessing little furniture, yet had each of them on the floor its iron pot always full of potatoes, at the service of the children, the fowls, the pig, and the beggar. In the absence of a poor-law and a law of settlement, the superfluous families wandered about and competed for work until sixpence a day became the standard wages without cow's grass or potato ground, the cottier system dis-

appeared, middlemen ground down the small farmers, and the whole population fell to a dead level of pauperism, mendicancy, despondency, and recklessness.

At last a poor-law was established, but with the workhouse test as its foundation, and under ordinary circumstances an absolute refusal of outdoor relief. One advantage derived from this law is the hindrance it presents to vagrancy: because the landowners now forbid strangers to settle on their lands, so as to acquire a settlement and to become chargeable to the district.

The poor-law indeed, did not prevent a horrible famine in 1846; but it provided machinery for mitigating the distress more quickly than could have been found without it.

Sinister prophecies have not been fulfilled. Population has not increased unduly: wages have not fallen: rents have not been swallowed by poor-rates.

Population indeed, instead of unduly increasing, has diminished by emigration rapidly and steadily: and if it is the famine, not the poor-law, which has accomplished this, at any rate the workhouses have facilitated the exodus, by offering a temporary asylum to the helpless left behind. Wages have naturally risen with the decrease of hands; and what is even more important, employment not being divided among so many persons, has become more constant.

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If again, we compare England with France, we find in England higher wages, larger and better cottages, food more nutritious, a higher standard of living.

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Setting side by side, England, Scotland, Ireland, and France, we see that England after 300 years of poor-laws, has had a far better condition among its working classes, than has been enjoyed by any of the other kingdoms, which have had either no poor-law or a very inefficient one.

We see also, that the introduction of a poor-law into Scotland and into Ireland, while it has relieved distress, and checked vagrancy and begging, has not brought about those evils which were foretold by prophets of ill: that if it has not caused a reduction of population and a rise of wages, it has perhaps aided these, and has certainly not prevented them from taking place.

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So far the argument is that a liberal poor-law is not incompatible with the wellbeing of a nation; since, comparing several kingdoms, the one pre-eminent for a liberal poor-law is also the one in which the condition of the working classes has been the most favourable; and since also, the exercise of greater liberality in Scotland, and the introduction of a poor-law into Ireland, have not prevented either a rise of wages in both countries, or a marvellous exodus from Ireland, or a diminished rate of increase in Scotland. But as no attempt has been made to prove that the poor-law caused a diminution of population or a rise of wages, it still remains to be shown what good a poor-law effects. It is not sufficient that it should be harmless: is it beneficial?

Two questions arise: is the exercise of charity incumbent on the affluent? and is part of such



charity best undertaken by a public administration?

We Protestants deride the notion that almsgiving is a practice beneficial in itself, without taking into account the effect produced on the recipients: we treat with scorn the doles at the gates of convents and mansions: we are willing to give only when we can be made to see that our contributions will be permanently useful, and do not tend to pauperise the receivers.

It is the abuse of charity, it is the ascertained fact of pauperising results following indiscriminate almsgiving and doles left by will: it is this which has brought into fashion among a few thinkers the monstrous dogma that all charity is a mistake. To combat this heresy, I have mentioned two cases of miserable destitution, the one in Paris and the other in London; and I ask whether Madame de Staël and M. Malherbes were wrong in giving food to a family of spectres, or whether they would have acted a more public-spirited part, in leaving father and mother and children to die slowly of hunger, as an example to their neighbours of the folly of marrying, without first providing against the possibilities of sickness and failure of work. I put the same question as regards an industrious Irishman in London, broken down by the poisonous occupation in which he was employed. I quote from M. Dupin the case of the Athenian youth put to death for hard-heartedness, because his judges were convinced that "he who was without pity would never prove a good citizen."

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But conceding that the relief of distress is the duty

of all who have the means, there follows the question, by whom is the function best exercised? by individuals, or by the public through their officers? I reply, by both: by individuals in occasional and well known cases, and especially in cases of persons reduced from a higher to a lower station, and in cases of the distressed among the middle classes.

One of the great advantages derived from systematic public relief, is that it enables us to put down mendicants. Beggars are no recent invention: in the *Odyssey* there is Irus who has the ill fortune to box with Ulysses: in the *New Testament* there is Lazarus, full of sores, lying at the rich man's gate: in Christian countries they have been plague-spots of growing civilization: in Paris they had their Court of Miracles, as in London they had their Alsatia, (Whitefriars) near the Temple. In Scotland they were authorized to beg: in Ireland they wandered about in crowds without licence. The prevalence of sturdy vagabonds in the Tudor times, was the origin of our poor-laws. And without a poor-law how can you extinguish the practice? Will you say to the starving family:—you are pining for food, we will not relieve you, you shall not beg, your duty is to stay at home and die as an example to others of the dangers of poverty. By means of a poor-law let us give the means of subsistence, and then absolutely forbid public begging.

But there is a large amount of misfortune always existing, which can be treated by a public administration better than by private charity: more economically, more effectively, with less danger of abuse. I will say little of sickness, which in England

is partly dealt with by benefit societies, and by hospitals and dispensaries voluntarily maintained by the richer classes. There are forms of disease however, which no private efforts have yet coped with: there are born idiots, the grief and plague of their parents; there are lunatics, scolded, beaten, locked up in an outhouse, chained to a cellar wall. All these, no intolerable burden to a community, are best provided for at the public expense.

External circumstances sometimes drive whole classes into poverty: there are continued frosts, there is cessation of trade as in Paisley, and more recently in Coventry, and on a vast scale in Lancashire during the cotton-dearth: there is the sudden introduction of machinery, as in the case of the foreign wool-combers, and flax-spinners: there are dearths and famines of which England indeed, has little recent experience, but which still rage through the world: there are inundations, fires, epidemics, revolutions, wars. If a poor-law is necessary even in peaceful and prosperous Great Britain, how much more among the continental nations, pinched with famines, tormented with wars, upheaved and shattered by revolutions.

My conclusions are that a public administration provides best for relieving the sickness of the lowest class, and for taking charge of idiots and lunatics of all the working classes: that public relief should always be at hand in cases of widespread misfortune, against which no reasonable prudence can provide, and which no amount of private charity can cope with. I am convinced too, by the examples of Scotland and Ireland, that to leave the destitute unre-



lieved, engenders not self-reliance and independence, but despair and recklessness. Instead of preaching to the wretched, help yourself and heaven will help you, I preach to the affluent, help the destitute and they will help themselves.

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I have thus dealt with the argument that systematic public relief relaxes men's energies, and leads them to depend on other men instead of themselves. It is not denied that injudicious and profuse relief does this. But I have contended also, that the refusal of all relief, causes a despondency and carelessness which are still worse than ordinary improvidence.

In support of this view, an appeal has been here made to the conduct of the working classes. England is peculiarly the land of poor-laws, the land in which these laws have done their worst for three hundred years. According to the theorists, the English working classes ought to be the most reckless of all working classes in marrying prematurely, and ought to be of all working classes the worst paid: it has been shown that the facts do not support the theory.

But an appeal is made to another set of facts. It turns out not only that the English working classes are better paid, better fed, better housed than other working classes, but that they exercise in one most important respect a prudence far beyond that found among other nations. The theorists would have us believe, that since the English labouring man can go to his parish officers when he is sick, therefore he

will not make any provision against sickness: that he will not himself provide either medical attendance or a substitute for wages. The truth is that the better part of the labouring men do make careful provision against a time of sickness: that they do secure medical attendance and a substitute for wages. This is done by means of benefit societies; and so numerous are these, that taking all classes together, both the highest and the middle classes (who do not require such provision) and the very lowest (who will not make such provision) every second family in England has on the average more than one subscriber. If England is the land of poor-laws, it is also the land of benefit societies. Nor are these societies anything new: their universality is owing to the long continuance of the practice: which indeed, seems to have sprung up before the poor-laws, to have grown and extended together with the poor-laws, and to have flourished just as the poor-laws have flourished. Aid the poor and they will aid themselves.

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Then there is the law of settlement: condemned we see by Adam Smith, as hindering the free circulation of labour; condemned perhaps, not without reason in the shape it then bore: since that time much mitigated in its provisions; but in some shape absolutely necessary, so long as poor-rates are raised locally instead of being supplied from the national treasury: adopted even in Paris; and regarded in Ireland as the effectual means of preventing the return of the former evils, of vagabondage and indefinite increase of population.



Poor-laws may be defended also, as a matter of police. In the absence of systematic relief, mendicancy and vagrancy grow rank: they become the trade of the idle and dissolute: a trade tolerated though forbidden; discouraged and sometimes severely repressed; never rooted out. All the unsparing severities in Paris towards the end of last century, though they cleared the streets of the squalid and hideous creatures who had haunted them, left too many of them among the slums and blind alleys already described, watching for opportunities to prey on their enemies, and in that fatal "Terror" of September enjoying for once an unlimited feast of blood, when they massacred noblemen, ladies, thieves, madmen, idiots, and infants.

Even putting individual duty and the cultivation of the heart aside, it is the business of the politician to prevent the formation of these dangerous classes, by relieving actual distress and rigorously forbidding mendicity.

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All this defence of poor-laws may seem too obvious to be necessary. Yet I have proved by quotations, that men of eminence have condemned these laws in unmeasured terms. How can this have happened? I reply that it was the gross abuses of the old poor-law which caused theorists to condemn all poor-laws; just as the rank corruptions of the French Church nursed into life the passionate hatred of the *Encyclopédistes*, while the milder predominance of the English church only called forth the sarcasms of Gibbon and the irony of Hume.



A sketch of the laws against vagabondage from the time of Richard II, shows how the 43rd Elizabeth at last came into existence. The vitality of that statute, which continued in substance for 230 years, shows that it was fitted for its purpose; that of putting down vagrancy by furnishing employment and relief in every parish. The large expenses incurred in carrying it out, led to repeated attempts at amendment. A hundred years ago, farming the poor, (letting them out to contractors) was regarded as a happy invention, but in a short time was abandoned through the cruel practices which followed.

Then came the long French war, which doubled and trebled the price of bread, which reduced the decent labourer to a tattered and famished condition, while landlords, farmers, and town capitalists were flourishing. The sliding scale followed: married men were entitled to an allowance graduated according to the number of their children: such injudicious profusion and niggardliness were sometimes combined, that while an able-bodied man married on Wednesday, and got relief on Friday, the widow and orphan met with little help. Gradually, other corruptions appeared. Saving men were discouraged; since the first duty of the farmers was to think of the rates, and a man with £5 in a savings' bank, could live for a time on that hoard. Unemployed labourers were billeted on farmers, who must needs employ them and dismiss better men who could take care of themselves. In some places overseers were bullied into giving relief: in many southern parishes, burning rickyards terrified the ratepayers into unwilling liberality. At last in one parish, that of Choles-

bury in Buckinghamshire, rent was no longer possible, the farmers gave up their holdings, the parish except a few acres was thrown out of cultivation, and the labourers claimed support from neighbouring parishes by means of a rate-in-aid. With all this ruinous maladministration, the labourers though far better paid than Irish or continental labourers, were in an unsatisfactory condition.

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It is no wonder that such abuses brought the whole system into discredit; and that many thinkers, taking the matter in the gross, failed to winnow out the wheat from the chaff.

We are told that the allowance system that sprung out of the war is chargeable with most of these evils. An unmarried man had to be resigned to low wages, without parish allowance: when he married he might look for something more: a child added to his claims; and two, four, six children, quickly augmented his income. All this, it is said, is false in principle. Yet what was done during the Irish famine? what was done during the Lancashire cotton-dearth? Did a single man in Ireland or in Lancashire, have the same allowance that was made to the married man with children? No: for in matters of charity, it is the need and not the desert which is considered. Wages indeed, are given for desert, but alms are given to relieve necessities. Now, when the quartern loaf rose from 5d. to 1s. or 1s. 3d., there was a most pressing necessity.

The allowance system then, as a temporary measure was expedient and right: the mistake was in

continuing it. The farmers, though earning good profits, resisted a considerable rise of wages, because they feared that there would be a difficulty in getting the rate down again: they liked the allowance system, and perhaps none the less because part of the rates which supplied the allowance, came out of the pockets of landlords, clergymen, and other residents. The landlords unfortunately, lent themselves to this folly of their tenants, and by their predominance in Parliament maintained the system after it had ceased to be necessary, and after it had proved ruinous when made permanent.

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How much longer the Tory party would have submitted to the poor-law abuses, we cannot say. We only know that the advent of the Whigs to power, and the reform of the House of Commons, quickly brought on inquiry and reconstitution.

The fundamental principle of the new law was the general application of the workhouse test: and certain theorists would gladly have made an absolute rule, as in Ireland, that until the workhouses were full no outdoor relief should be given. Such a rule is cruel to old age and to sickness. In towns it is most improvident: since it drives to despair the decent mechanics, deprived of their livelihood by long continued depression of trade, and compels them to sell or pawn their furniture and clothes; it famishes the children, drives the parents to despair and drink, and breaks up the household, probably never again to be established.

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The new law, while it continued the practice of local administration, established a central governing power: not quite strong enough, and by no means active enough, as the event has proved; but still a highly useful means of stimulus and control.

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It cannot be disputed that the old poor-law had been greatly abused. Among the mischiefs most felt was the great increase of expense; which indeed, would have attracted less attention if it had been distributed uniformly over the kingdom, instead of being two or three shillings in the pound in one district and twenty or thirty in another. The new poor-law at once much reduced the amount expended. I fear however, that this sudden and violent change, brought with it great and unmerited hardships to the poor. When theorists have their way, present suffering is apt to be overlooked.

After a time, lookers-on found their sympathies awakened: the Andover case, of paupers picking out and eating the putrid marrow of crushed bones, shocked the sense of public decency.

The new law as to illegitimacy too, was seen to be harsh and crushing, in throwing on the woman the whole burden of the sin, and leaving the incontinent and licentious man to go free. Doctrinaires, again! who dreamed of putting down unchastity by severity; as if a vice common to all ages and all countries, could be extirpated by Draconian punishments.

The severities of the new law have since been relaxed: the workhouse test is now applied occa-

sionally, not universally; the fathers of illegitimate children are required to help in maintaining them. It is alleged that we have again swung too much to the side of mitigation in one respect: that of giving relief in aid of wages. One important distinction however, is often forgotten: if able-bodied men in full work have their wages eked out by union pay, that practice is false in principle; but if the sick, the infirm, the aged, able to do a little work, have their insufficient earnings added to by the union, that is surely better than driving them into the house.

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If then, the outcry against poor-laws generally, was really the result of abuse and maladministration, of able-bodied men pampered and widows neglected, of vice connived at and prudence discouraged, of ruinous rates misapplied and parishes pauperized; the new poor-law has taken away this ground for censure, and has put us into a position to see the question clearly and without prejudice.

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The eighth Section shows that England is not the only country in which a poor-law has been found necessary: it gives an abridgment of some recent essays of M. Maxime Du Camp, from which we learn what was done in Paris until the German war of 1870. We learn that there exist in Paris as in London, destitution, squalor, mendicancy, imposture, undeserving persons relieved, and real want left to

cold and hunger and death. We see the fallaciousness of the notion, that it is our poor-law which has created the helplessness and improvidence of our lowest classes.

The half-savage, lawless, ferocious inhabitants of the *Cour des Miracles*, were for centuries one of the plagues of Paris: repressed and thinned from time to time by government raids, but springing up again because the roots were left to throw up new offshoots: the numbers sent to the galleys, transported, hanged, being soon replaced by the idle, the vicious, the reckless. Apparently extirpated under Louis XVI, the "Terror," the September massacres, revealed the existence of the hellhounds who had escaped.

Mendicancy is not as yet put down, but those who are caught practising it are sent to the wretched asylum at Saint-Denis. It is not put down, because those who are too idle to work, must beg or starve.

Villers-Cotterets is an asylum for the destitute, and the institution apparently is so pleasing and so gently conducted, that it may produce a bad effect on those outside who hesitate as to prudence and self-denial.

Out-door relief is granted in Paris, and sometimes in a profuse fashion too much like that of our unreformed poor-law. The workhouse test seems much needed. Just however, as in London, many frightful cases of famine and death still occur.

But though the application of the workhouse test seems much needed, that does not happen through the want of *hospices* (asylums) for the reception of paupers. No less than seven are mentioned, all dependent upon the *Assistance Publique*. Of these



the one named l'Institution Sainte-Périne, has the character of an almshouse for decayed gentry.

Infancy as well as old age, is provided for. The law in Paris is different from that in England, where parents cannot send their children to the workhouse, without themselves becoming inmates, and cannot leave their children in the workhouse when they discharge themselves. The infant institution in Paris cannot be called a foundling hospital, because the children are sent to nurses in the country. There is no limitation to the reception of infants, who can be taken by a parent or by a stranger. The number thus abandoned exceeds a hundred a week, and may be an eighth of all that are born in Paris.

Great difficulty has been found in dealing with such of these foundlings as have grown up refractory. Agricultural schools have been repeatedly tried, but have uniformly failed.

There are two great asylums for helpless persons; for the old, the infirm, the mad: the one for females is Bicêtre; the one for the males is the Salpêtrière. Here as at Saint-Denis, the nurses are said to be excellent, many of them being daughters of educated families, who have devoted them to these good works. Would that we Protestants could imitate our Roman Catholic neighbours in applying to purposes of the highest usefulness lives too often spent among us in frivolity and discontent!

The institutions I have sketched belong to Paris only: there being little formal provision for the indigent in other parts of France, notwithstanding an *octroi* levied nominally for the poor, but diverted to a great extent to other purposes.

In few words then, the course of my argument is this. Charity has been acknowledged by all moralists of every age and in every clime, as one of the first duties of man: if it has been sometimes decried in modern times, that has not happened from any harshness on the part of the writers, who in fact give to the poor notwithstanding their convictions; it has happened partly through a one-sided philosophy, but mainly through the profuseness and ill direction of many men's alms, which cause destitution while apparently relieving it.

The denunciation of poor-laws has in like manner sprung from the abuses of our old system: abuses now swept away, to be replaced in some cases by undue severity.

Many classes of persons must have relief, and relief which often cannot be afforded by their own families or by private charity: such are lunatics, idiots, the epileptic.

The rapid introduction of machinery, while it enriches the world, sometimes reduces thousands to destitution which they could not foresee. The absence of a special organization to meet this case, allows a decent class of people to sink into hopeless poverty; and the spectacle of this misery excites in the minds of other mechanics a bitter opposition to the introduction of further machinery, (an opposition which has a defence more than specious.)

Want of work happening on a large scale, through unusual frosts, through failure of material as in Lancashire lately, or even through a depressed condition of trade generally, makes legal relief a necessity. Dearth, famines, fires, inundations, bring

the same need, though more often in other lands than in ours.

The greatest lesson we learn from the history of countries which have had no poor-law or an insufficient one, is that destitute persons left to their sufferings, so far from becoming nerved and braced for the struggle, fall into a hopeless and reckless condition, and bring up their children to squalor, rags, and beggary.

The account of Parisian legalized relief, suggests to us that we have two great wants in this country. The first want is that of instructed nurses of a higher class than our present ones. The second want is that of ready and liberal aid to educated men and women who have fallen into poverty; by asylums if you please, but still better by modest pensions: great care being taken however, that such pensions do not go in aid of wages so as to reduce their rate generally.

The lessons to be learned may be summed up in two maxims:

HELP THE POOR AND THEY WILL HELP THEMSELVES.

SO HELP THE POOR THAT THEY SHALL HELP THEMSELVES.

THE END.





## NOTES

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